

## Comparative Evaluation of Advanced Platelet Rich Fibrin Membrane with and without Glutaraldehyde Crosslinking- A *De Novo In Vitro* Trial

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**Received:** July 17, 2019; **Published:** September 05, 2019

### Abstract

**Objective:** Advanced platelet rich fibrin (A-PRF) is a biopolymer which releases growth factors to facilitate tissue regeneration and healing. Rapid degradability and poor mechanical properties have hindered its use solely as a GTR membrane. Treatment with crosslinking agents modify the density of the biopolymer fibres and improve their stability. In the present study we assess the crosslinking effect of Glutaraldehyde (GLUT) on de-gradation time and mechanical properties of A-PRF membrane.

**Methodology:** For this study, Fifteen human A-PRF membrane samples were prepared. Out of which 9 samples were treated with 0.1% GLUT for 10 minutes (experimental group) and the remaining 6 were untreated (control group). The release of GLUT from treated samples was evaluated by means of a spectrophotometer. Biodegradability of A-PRF samples of both the groups were evaluated by using human plasmin and mechanical properties by using a universal testing machine under standard ambient conditions.

**Result:** The release of GLUT from experimental group was found to be minimal. The control group samples degraded within 30 - 32 days whereas the GLUT- treated samples degraded within 50 - 53 days. Additionally, the experimental group samples revealed better mechanical properties than the control group.

**Conclusion:** Our result suggest that, crosslinking with GLUT effectively prolongs the degradation time and improves the mechanical properties of the A- PRF membrane thus opening the possibilities of its use alone as a GTR membrane.

**Clinical Relevance:** The result support the use of glutaraldehyde crosslinked A-PRF membrane as a torchbearer for the search of chairside, cost effective and optimal GTR membrane for periodontal regeneration.

**Keywords:** A-PRF; Glutaraldehyde; Crosslinking

### Abbreviations

ERT: Endogenous Regenerative Therapy; GLUT: Glutaraldehyde; A-PRF: Advanced Platelet Rich Fibrin; GTR: Guided Tissue Regeneration; ADMA: Acellular Dermal Matrix Graft

### Introduction

The main objective of periodontal therapy is to achieve the regeneration of lost supporting structures of teeth due to periodontitis [1]. Currently there is an increased focus on endogenous regenerative techniques. (ERT) for predictable periodontal regeneration. ERT includes patient derived platelet concentrates, growth factors and fibrin scaffolds which assist in recruitment of progenitor stem cells from neighbouring tissues [2].

Advanced Platelet-rich fibrin (A-PRF) is a third generation platelet and autologous cicatricial matrix used as a biomaterial, which releases growth factors to facilitate tissue regeneration and promotes hard and soft tissue healing [3]. Its compressed membranous form has been cited to be used as an absorbable barrier membrane in guided tissue regeneration (GTR) treatment [2]. Studies suggest that the adjunctive use of PRF in combination with barrier membranes are effective not only in the treatment of intrabony defects in chronic periodontitis but also used to provide good soft tissue coverage over the immediate implants [3,4].

Though PRF membrane doesn't degrade immediately after its application due to slow remodelling of its strong fibrin matrix but loses its structural integrity within 7 days similar to non crosslinked collagen membrane [5]. Barrier membranes are expected to remain intact atleast for 3 - 4 weeks at the implanted sites for progressive regeneration and integration of periodontal tissues [6]. The major shortcomings of A-PRF include, rapid degradability and poor mechanical strength. Thus, A-PRF membrane alone has not been popularized in GTR treatment as it cannot maintain space for tissue regeneration and prevent epithelial cell migration for sufficient periods of time [7].

A study was aimed at the modification of biopolymers to achieve an idealized combination of mechanical properties, geometry and surface chemistry by subjecting it to crosslinking treatments. These modified biopolymers provided resistance against enzyme-dependent degradation while increasing the strength of the biopolymer membranes by modifying their crosslinking densities.[8] Introduction of intrafibrillar and interfibrillar chemical bonds during crosslinking causes mechanical strengthening of collagenous tissue [9].

Various physical agents like Rose Bengal dye, white light/ultraviolet radiation and chemical agents like glucose, ribose, glyceraldehyde, glutaraldehyde, genipin etc have been used as crosslinking agents for collagen degradation evaluation [10,11]. Among the chemical agents, Glutaraldehyde (GLUT) is the most commonly used crosslinking agent in clinical use for fixing collagenous tissues. GLUT is fairly inexpensive, easily available and has the ability to cross-link quickly over large distances with a wide array of amino groups [8,11-13].

Significant increase in corneal rigidity and resistance to enzymatic degradation of porcine heart valves was observed following crosslinking by glutaraldehyde [14,15]. Glutaraldehyde vapour treatment has enhanced the mechanical property, retarded the degradation and maintained the bioactivity of electrospun fibrinogen scaffold [8].

We hypothesized to improve on the shortcomings of PRF to use it as GTR membrane. Therefore, in this study, we treated A-PRF membrane with Glutaraldehyde and tested its degradability and mechanical properties *in vitro*.

## **Materials and Methods**

Fifteen systemically healthy volunteers within the age group of 20-35 years of either sex having platelet count within normal limits (1.5 to 3 lakhs) were chosen. Subjects who are smokers and/or on anticoagulant therapy were excluded.

The study design and consent forms for all the procedures performed with human subjects were approved by the institutional ethical committee (Ref. No. BDC/Exam/291/2018-19) at Bapuji Dental College and Hospital, Davangere, Karnataka, India, which is in accordance with Helsinki declaration of 1975 as revised in 2008. The purpose of the study was explained to the volunteers verbally and written consent to participate in the study was obtained prior to commencement of the study.

### **PRF preparation**

A-PRF samples were prepared according to the protocol developed by Ghanati, *et al* [16]. 10 ml of venous blood was collected from the volunteers using Vacutainer™ tubes (Japan Becton, Dickinson and Company, Tokyo Japan) and transferred to A-PRF™ tubes (Zhejiang Gongdong Medical Technology Co., Ltd, China) which were immediately centrifuged by A-PRF12 system (A-PRF-12; Dragon Laboratory Instruments Ltd. Beijing, China) at 1500 rpm for 14 minutes. Following centrifugation, three parts were obtained in the tube: a red blood cell base at the bottom, acellular plasma as a supernatant (platelet-poor plasma), and the PRF clot in between. The clot was removed from the PRF tube and then membrane was prepared by compression in an A-PRF expression box.

### Glutaraldehyde crosslinking of the PRF

Three A-PRF membranes were crosslinked with 10 ml of 0.1% GLUT solution, in phosphate buffer solution at a pH of 7.4 for 10 minutes at room temperature (Figure 1).

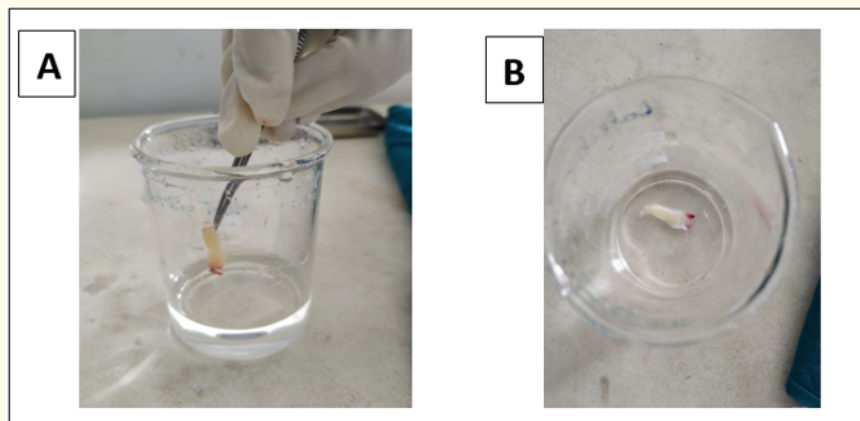


Figure 1: A&B- PRF membrane kept in 0.1% GLUT at 7.4 pH, 10 mins for crosslinking.

### Glutaraldehyde release test [17]

The release of GLUT from crosslinked PRF membranes were evaluated by means of a spectrophotometric method (UV1600; Shimadzu, USA) Three GLUT crosslinked PRF membranes were immersed in 3 ml phosphate buffer solution in separate beakers with pH of 7.4 at 37°C. They were then transferred to 7 ml of a 0.1M glycine solution at room temperature. After 24 hours the glycine solution (release buffer) from each test sample was collected and its absorbance at 436 nm was measured using spectrophotometer. GLUT concentration released by the samples in the glycine solution were determined by comparison with a standard calibration curve. The test was continued for 2 weeks to evaluate further GLUT release from the samples (Figure 2).

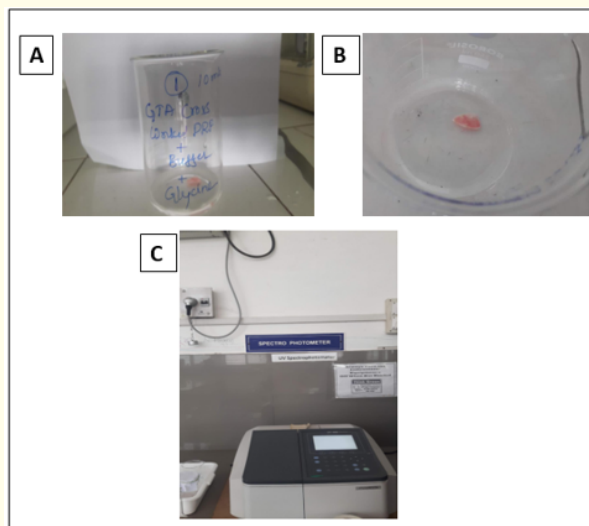
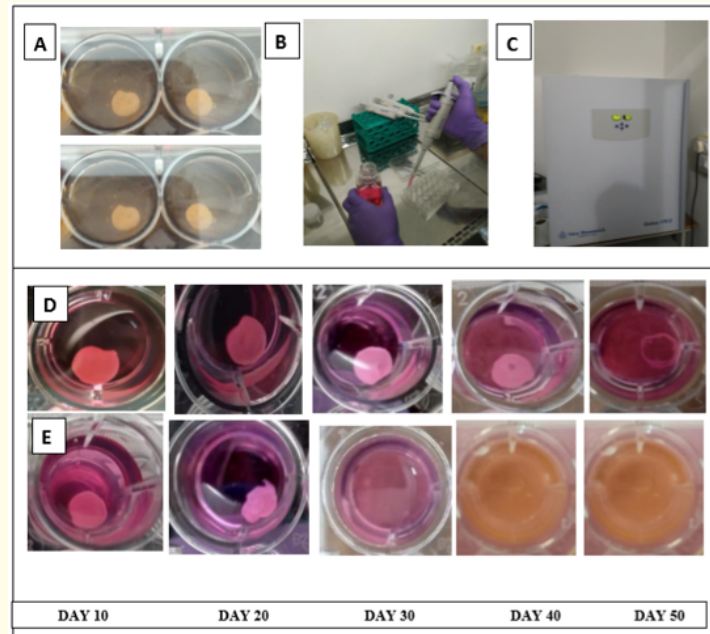


Figure 2: A- GLUT crosslinked PRF membranes immersed in phosphate buffer. B- Membranes transferred to 0.1M glycine. C- The release of GLUT evaluated by a spectrophotometer.

**Accelerated degradation in vitro test [18]**

Six A- PRF membrane disks of equal diameter (0.8 mm) were prepared by using a biopsy punch (Medsor impex, India) and kept in 24-well plates (upper row containing crosslinked samples and the lower row containing glutaraldehyde uncrosslinked samples) Fibrin is known to be degraded by plasmin *in vivo*. Hence the PRF membrane discs were incubated in a CO<sub>2</sub> incubator with media containing Hank's balanced salt solution (HBSS) supplemented with human plasmin (2 microgram of plasmin per ml of HBSS) (Sigma-Aldrich, UK). The media was replenished once in every 48 hours and change in their appearance was photographed (Figure 3). The test was repeated two additional times independently and the degradation time of all six samples were observed.

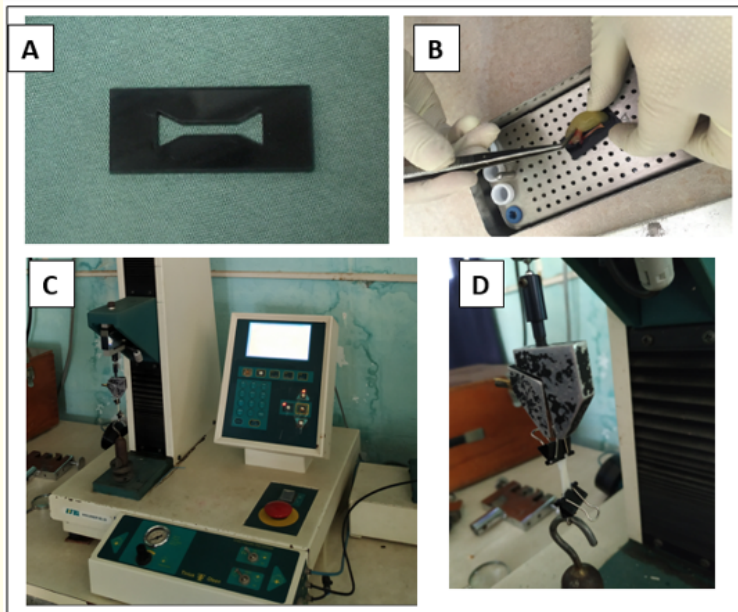


**Figure 3:** AA-GLUT crosslinked membranes kept on the top row and uncrosslinked membranes on the bottom row in a 24 well plate. B- Hank's balanced salt solution (HBSS) supplemented with human plasmin (2 microgram of plasmin per ml of HBSS) added. C- Incubation in CO<sub>2</sub> incubator. D- The GLUT- treated samples degraded within 50- 53 days E- Control group samples degraded within 30-32 days.

**Mechanical tests [19]**

A specially designed plexiglass mold was fabricated to make the fibrin specimens identical in size, volume, and figure. The thickness of the mold was 2 mm and the width was 2 mm in the narrow middle part and 6 mm in the larger ends. The total volume of the mold was 104 mm<sup>3</sup>.

The mechanical properties of the three GLUT crosslinked samples and three uncrosslinked membranes were measured using a desktop universal testing machine (Tinius Olsen h50KS, India) with maximum load cell capacity of 500N under standard ambient conditions of 25 ± 3°C and 50 ± 25% RH (Relative Humidity). The larger ends of the dog-bone shape specimen were held with the clips of the machine without any tension such that, the initial apparent gauge length (the distance between clamp faces) was set to 10 mm for all the samples. Tensile loading was applied at a cross head speed of 2 mm/min; the maximum load at specimen failure was recorded and tensile strength was calculated using following formula:  $S = F/A$ , where  $F$  is maximum force (N) and  $A$  is unit area (m<sup>2</sup>). Stress-strain curve was recorded with test Xpert II software simultaneously. Stiffness of the specimen (Young's modulus of elasticity) was obtained by stress/strain and the total area under the curve designated as toughness of the specimens (Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Plexiglass mold was fabricated. B- All Samples compressed in plexiglass mold C- The larger ends of the dog-bone shape specimen held by clips with initial apparent gauge length of 10 mm D- Tensile loading applied at a cross head speed of 2 mm/min

## Results

### Glutaraldehyde release test

After 24 hours of storage in buffer solution, the crosslinked A-PRF membrane released an amount of GLUT corresponding to 0.083%. No further GLUT release was observed following further storage of samples in buffer solution for upto 2 weeks (Table 1).

	Groups	No. of samples	Mean ± SD	P value
Tensile strength	1	3	.16 ± 0.20	0.005*
	2	3	.07 ± 0.01	
Modulus of elasticity	1	3	.11 ± 0.01	0.643
	2	3	.11 ± 0.01	
Toughness	1	3	.20 ± 0.03	
	2	3	.10 ± 0.02	0.016*

**Table 1:** Mechanical test results.

Group 1: GLUT Crosslinked Samples; Group 2: Control Samples. \*-Statistically significant

### Accelerated degradation in vitro test

The GLUT crosslinked A-PRF membrane disks were degraded in a time-dependent manner and completely digested within 50 - 53 days of incubation. In contrast, the uncrosslinked A-PRF membrane disks initially turned the HBSS cloudy and then showed complete digestion between 30 - 32 days of incubation.

### Mechanical test

The GLUT crosslinked and uncrosslinked membranes were examined by a tensile test and were characterized by three parameters: (1) Tensile strength (2) Young's modulus of elasticity (3) Toughness. The results of all tests for two groups are summarized in table 1. Tensile strength of the crosslinked group with mean value of 0.16MPa was significantly higher than the uncrosslinked group with mean value of 0.07 Mpa (P value= 0.005). The crosslinked group was slightly stiffer than uncrosslinked group but was not statistically significant ( $P = 0.643$ ). Toughness of crosslinked group was significantly higher than uncrosslinked group ( $P = 0.016$ ).

### Discussion

PRF is an autogenic biomaterial containing a large number of growth factors and a dense fibrin network. [20] It is prepared by a specific centrifugation protocol by Ghanati [16] through contact activation, which facilitates intrinsic coagulation cascade without biochemical modification [21]. This protocol enhances natural and slow polymerization of blood clot to facilitate higher percentage of fine and flexible equilateral fibrin junctions, which provide greater elasticity and support the enmeshment of intrinsic cytokines and growth factors. It has stimulant potential on cell proliferation, migration chemotaxis and serves as a healing matrix [22-24].

PRF has been clinically used for the management of Grade II furcations [25] in improving gingival biotype and root coverage [26,27] in socket augmentation [27] and for sinus lift procedure [28,29]. Open flap debridement (OFD) with PRF has shown better reduction in probing depth and gain in clinical attachment level than the OFD alone [30,31]. Studies that have investigated the combined use of PRF and bone substitutes have revealed better clinical outcomes than bone substitutes alone [32-35].

Here an attempt was made to overcome the limitation of the use of PRF as a GTR membrane by crosslinking. This effectively controls the biodegradation rate and improves the tensile properties of the membrane.

Glutaraldehyde is one of the strongest crosslinking agent with highest number of cross links. Prolonged exposure to high concentration of GLUT lead to incomplete cross linking due to rapid initial polymerization at the surface of fibres. This prevents access of GLUT molecule to the core region for initiation of crosslinking either by creation of nucleation sites or by steric hindrance, which facilitates the consumption of large amount of free glutaraldehyde to cause high toxicity. Higher concentration of glutaraldehyde showed marked alteration in cell morphology and reduction in cell viability. At low concentration, the initial polymerization was slower and intramolecular cross links were formed in reconstituted collagen fibres in a time dependent manner. Penetration of GLUT molecule accessibility to the reactive group was faster in room temperature than in cold [36]. Treatment with 0.1% of GLUT successfully increased the biomechanical strength of human and porcine sclera [10]. Hence 0.1% GLUT was used for crosslinking of A-PRF at room temperature for 10 minutes.

Though patients on anticoagulant therapy have been known to produce quite normal PRF clots but the centrifugation time needs to be prolonged to obtain better PRF membranes. Coagulation and hemostatic processes have been found to be impaired by smoking thus affecting the coagulation-fibrinolysis cascade and impairing normal PRF clot formation [37,38]. Thus, both these groups of patients were excluded from the study.

PRF box helped to obtain a relatively uniform size and thickness of the PRF membrane from the clot. Converting these membranes to discs of 0.8 mm radius, by the use of a biopsy punch eliminated the inconsistency in tissue sampling and the concomitant problem of irregular diffusion of glutaraldehyde [39].

Till date very limited literature is available regarding the crosslinking of PRF to prolong its degradation. Heat compressed PRF found to be plasmin resistant remained stable for longer than 10 days *in vitro* but *in vivo* animal implantation revealed its degradation about 3 weeks in contrast to control PRF [18]. Similarly in our study 50 - 53 days of *in vitro* degradation may hope us to expect approximately 155 - 160 days for degradation on implantation in the tissues, which is approximately equal to commercially available collagen based

membranes [40]. In a study, though a low crosslink density was observed but due to presence of thick fibrin fibres and high serum retention, A- PRF showed its superiority over degradation, in contrast to Platelet Poor Plasma Derived Fibrin membrane due to enhanced ratio of volume to surface area [41].

GLUT toxicity is related to its release from the crosslinked material. In this trial only 0.083 wt % GLUT was released after 24 hours and no further release was observed for following 2 weeks. In contrast to this the cumulative GLUT release from gelatin films crosslinked with 0.1% GLUT solution was about 2 wt % after 1 week and increased upto 9 wt % after 4 weeks.[17] This variation maybe due to a longer duration of crosslinking in the later.

The mechanical properties of PRF is closely related to its degradability [41]. GLUT treated A-PRF samples have shown an enhancement in the mechanical properties with prolonged degradation. Similar results have been observed in ADMA (Acellular Dermal Matrix graft), gelatin, collagen following crosslinking with GLUT [17,42,43].

Amniotic membrane (AM) matrices treated with low concentration GLUT (i.e. < 0.03 mmol GLUT/mg AM) displayed good compatibility with human corneal epithelial cells [44]. Enzyme-loaded erythrocytes treated with GLUT showed more resistance to lysis without inactivating the enzymes that have been entrapped inside them [45]. Successful implantation of periosteal cells over PRF crosslinked by heat compression showed their potential as scaffold for regenerative cells and preservation of its biocompatibility make its application as GTR membrane in periodontal therapy [18].

Here, the obtained GLUT crosslinked PRF membrane was easy to handle, flexible enough to allow close adaptation to defect morphology was easy to cut and shape without sharp edges and was strong enough to conform to the defect shape, yet was able to preserve its structure without perforation. We can expect the crosslinked A-PRF membrane to be used as a GTR membrane as well as a scaffold for periodontal regeneration.

## **Conclusion**

*In vitro* trials help us to know the properties and characteristics of newer or modified regenerative materials and also facilitate to design and conduct future clinical trials to detect their beneficial effects on tooth supporting tissues. In our study, Gluteradehyde treatment increased mechanical strength and prolonged degradation time with minimal gluteraldehyde release in A- PRF membranes. This result opens up the possibility of its use as a GTR membrane. However the study is still at its primitive stage and its possible cytotoxic impact and ultrastructure needs extensive evaluation for its clinical application in the field of periodontal regeneration.

## **Acknowledgements**

The contributors of this study were: Dr. Prakash and Dr. Prasanna (Professor, Department of Chemistry, Bapuji Institute of Engineering and Technology). Dr. Ravindra (Head of the Department, Department of Textiles, Bapuji Institute of Engineering and Technology), Dr. Gopal (Head of the Department, Department of Biochemistry, Davangere University) Dr. Kiran (PhD student, Department of Biochemistry, Davangere University)

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

## **Funding**

No funding was provided for the work of the study.

## **Ethical Approval**

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards".

## Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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**Volume 18 Issue 10 October 2019**

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