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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES:

The aim of this randomized controlled clinical study was to assess soft tissue contour changes after different alveolar ridge preservation procedures.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Following tooth extraction, 30 patients were randomly assigned to the following treatments (Tx) - Tx 1: xenogenic bone substitute (pre- hydrated collagenated cortico-cancellous porcine bone) and free gingival graft; Tx 2: free gingival graft alone; Tx 3: xenogenic bone substitute; Tx 4: no further treatment (control). Impressions were obtained before tooth extraction (baseline) and 4 months after surgery. Cast models were optically scanned, digitally superimposed and horizontal measurements of the contour alterations between time points were performed using digital imaging analysis.

RESULTS:

All groups displayed contour shrinkage at the buccal aspect ranging from a mean horizontal reduction of 0.8 ± 0.5 mm (Tx 1) to 2.3 ± 1.1 mm (control). Statistically significant differences were found between Tx 1 and Tx 4 as well as Tx 2 and Tx 4. A significant positive influence of the free gingival graft on the maintenance of the ridge width was recorded ($p < 0.001$).

CONCLUSION:

In this study, alveolar ridge preservation techniques were not able to entirely compensate for alveolar ridge reduction. Covering the orifice of the extraction socket with a free gingival tissue graft seems to have the potential to limit but not avoid the post-operative external contour shrinkage based on optical scans.

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