

**NOVEL INVERTED SCLERAL FLAP VALVE: A NEW SURGICAL APPROACH TO
MINIMIZE TRABECULECTOMY COMPLICATIONS AND PRESERVE CORNEAL
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ABSTRACT

Trabeculectomy is a common procedure for lowering intraocular pressure in glaucoma patients. However, it can negatively impact the integrity of corneal endothelial cells and central corneal thickness (CCT), potentially leading to vision-threatening complications. This cohort study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of a novel surgical technique that minimizes these complications by creating an autovalve from an inverted scleral flap during trabeculectomy. The study focused on assessing the impact on the cornea and comparing it to conventional methods. The study included 50 glaucoma patients (20 males and 30 females) who underwent trabeculectomy, divided into three groups: Group 1 (20 males, mean age 66.15 years), Group 2 (30 females, mean age 59.3 years), and a control group (30 patients who underwent conventional trabeculectomy with similar age and gender distribution). Preliminary results showed a significant reduction in the incidence of trabeculectomy complications in the groups utilizing the innovative valve technique compared to the control group, including:

- Hypotony
- Leakage
- Infection
- Inflammation
- Bleb size

Chi-square analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the incidence of all complications among the groups ($P < 0.05$). Additionally, there was no need for scleral sutures or mitomycin C in the groups utilizing the valve technique, unlike the control group. The study also demonstrated that the novel valve technique helped preserve the integrity of corneal endothelial cells and central corneal thickness. Before surgery, there was no statistically significant difference in corneal endothelial cell count between males and females ($P = 1$). After surgery, no significant decrease in corneal endothelial cell count was observed in the groups utilizing the valve technique ($P = 0.23$ for Group 1 and $P = 0.37$ for Group 2), compared to a significant decrease in the control group ($P = 0.02$). The results also showed a statistically significant difference in central corneal thickness before surgery between patients under 70 years old and those above 70 ($P < 0.0001$). After surgery, a slight, non-significant decrease in central corneal thickness was observed in the groups utilizing the valve technique ($P = 0.11$ for Group 1 and $P = 0.08$ for Group 2), while a significant decrease was observed in the control group ($P = 0.03$). These promising findings indicate that the novel inverted scleral flap valve technique is a promising new surgical approach for treating glaucoma while preserving corneal health.

KEYWORDS: Glaucoma, Trabeculectomy, Autovalve, Inverted Scleral Flap, Surgical Complications, Cohort Study, Corneal Endothelial Cells, Central Corneal Thickness.

INTRODUCTION

Glaucoma is a disease affecting the optic nerve that can lead to irreversible vision loss. Elevated intraocular pressure (IOP) is the most significant risk factor for glaucoma development.^[8] The cornea plays a vital role in maintaining normal IOP by regulating the flow of aqueous humor out of the eye. Corneal endothelial cells are responsible for maintaining corneal transparency and

preventing edema, contributing to clear vision.^[21] Corneal diseases, such as corneal edema or endothelial cell damage, can influence IOP and contribute to the development or worsening of glaucoma.^[20]

Trabeculectomy is a common surgical procedure for treating glaucoma, aiming to lower IOP by creating a new pathway for aqueous humor drainage.^[11,9] Despite its

effectiveness in lowering IOP, conventional trabeculectomy can lead to troubling complications that threaten its long-term success and can affect corneal health and function.^[2,10] Following trabeculectomy, the cornea can play a significant role in the development of optic nerve atrophy if its integrity and function are not preserved. Endothelial cell damage or corneal edema can lead to blurred vision, subsequently increasing pressure on the optic nerve and accelerating its atrophy.^[21]

Inverted Scleral Flap Valve Mechanism

1. Formation

- After performing trabeculectomy and forming a flap from the sclera and conjunctiva, the flap is inverted so that its inner surface (which was facing the anterior chamber) faces outward and its outer surface (which was facing the conjunctiva) faces inward.
- The inverted flap is placed in the trabeculectomy opening, ensuring its edges cover the opening tightly and are secured with surgical sutures.

2. Pressure Balance

- **When intraocular pressure rises:** The increased pressure inside the eye pushes the inverted flap upward, allowing aqueous humor to flow from inside the eye to the outside through the trabeculectomy opening.
- **When intraocular pressure drops or in case of trauma:** The decreased intraocular pressure or external pressure on the eye causes the valve to close automatically, preventing fluid from flowing back into the eye. This occurs due to the pressure exerted by the fluid outside the eye on the inverted flap, leading to the closure of the opening and preventing leakage.
- **Mechanical strength:** Laboratory tests have shown that the valve made from the inverted scleral flap can withstand a pressure difference of up to [insert your data] mmHg before it starts to leak. This is an important indicator of the valve's strength and effectiveness in preventing excessive intraocular pressure reduction.

3. Flow Control

- The surgeon can control the rate of aqueous humor flow by adjusting the size and shape of the valve during surgery. This can be achieved by:
 - Changing the size of the trabeculectomy opening.
 - Adjusting the thickness and width of the scleral flap.
 - Using surgical sutures to adjust the tension of the inverted flap.

4. Infection Prevention

- The valve acts as a physical barrier, reducing the risk of bacteria entering the eye through the trabeculectomy opening. Controlling the flow of aqueous humor helps prevent fluid accumulation at the wound site, reducing the risk of infection.

5. Inflammation Reduction

- Since the valve is made from the patient's own scleral tissue (autologous tissue), it reduces the risk of immune response and inflammation compared to using foreign materials. Reducing inflammation helps improve wound healing and increases the success rate of the surgery.

Scientific Justifications, Opinions, and Comparisons

- **One-way valve principle:** Our innovation is based on the one-way valve principle used in many medical and engineering applications.
 - For example, one-way valves are used in the heart to allow blood to flow in only one direction.
 - They are also used in irrigation systems to prevent water backflow.^[23]
- **Mechanical properties of the sclera:** The sclera is a strong and flexible tissue, making it suitable for creating an effective valve.
 - Studies have shown that the sclera has high tensile strength and tear resistance, making it suitable for withstanding intraocular pressure.
 - Its flexibility allows the valve to open and close easily in response to changes in intraocular pressure.^[24]
- **Immune compatibility:** Using the patient's own scleral tissue reduces the risk of immune response and inflammation compared to using foreign materials.^[25]
 - For example, a study on patients who underwent trabeculectomy using valves made from synthetic materials showed a much higher incidence of inflammation compared to patients who underwent surgery using valves made from their own scleral tissue.^[26]
- **Innovation Support**
 - That is "a revolutionary step in glaucoma treatment." "this technique promises to reduce the incidence of complications and improve long-term surgical outcomes."
 - "This technique is new and requires further studies to prove its effectiveness."

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of a novel surgical innovation that minimizes trabeculectomy complications and reduces its impact on the cornea. This is achieved by creating an autovalue from an inverted scleral flap during surgery.

METHODOLOGY

- **Study Type:** Cohort study.
- **Patients:** The study included 50 glaucoma patients who underwent trabeculectomy. The patients were divided into three groups:
 - Group 1: 20 patients (40%) males, with a mean age of 66.15 years.

- Group 2: 30 patients (60%) females, with a mean age of 59.3 years.
- Group 3: The control group, consisting of 30 glaucoma patients who underwent conventional trabeculectomy within the same time period, maintaining a comparable gender and age distribution with the other two groups.

Central Corneal Thickness Before Surgery

- **Patients under 70 years old:** 570 ± 30 micrometers
- **Patients over 70 years old:** 500 ± 30 micrometers

Central Corneal Thickness After Surgery in the Control Group

- **Patients under 70 years old:** 552.9 ± 30 micrometers
- **Patients over 70 years old:** 485 ± 30 micrometers

These values indicate the approximate central corneal thickness for females and males in the control group, showing a slight but significant decrease after surgery.

Calculation of the average number of corneal endothelial cells for both groups (females and males) and the p-value for each group

Number of corneal endothelial cells before surgery

- **Females:** 400 ± 1520 cells/mm²
- **Males:** 400 ± 2200 cells/mm²

Number of corneal endothelial cells after surgery in the control group

- **Females:** 400 ± 1489.6 cells/mm² (decrease of 30.4 cells)
- **Males:** 400 ± 2156 cells/mm² (decrease of 44 cells)
- **Surgery:** Trabeculectomy was performed on Group 1 using the novel valve technique. The scleral flap was inverted and positioned in an inverted manner in the trabeculectomy opening. Trabeculectomy was performed on Group 2 using the conventional Trabeculectomy
- **Surgery**
- **Patient Follow-up:** Patients were followed up regularly after surgery (at months 1, 3, 6, and 12) to evaluate IOP, examine the cornea (including endothelial cell count and corneal thickness), and detect any complications.

RESULTS

4.1. Complications and Comparison with Global Studies

The results demonstrated a remarkable reduction in the incidence of trabeculectomy complications in the groups utilizing the innovative valve technique compared to the control group and previous studies employing conventional trabeculectomy. This reduction included the following complications:

Complication	Incidence in Conventional Trabeculectomy	Incidence in Innovative Valve Technique	P-value
Hypotony chorionic	5-30% ^[1,15]	2%	< 0.05
Leakage	2-10% ^[1,4]	0%	< 0.01
Infection	1-5% ^[1,3]	0%	< 0.05
Inflammation	5-10% ^[16]	1%	< 0.01
Bleb size	Large and prominent ^[17]	Very small and less prominent	-
Need for Scleral Suture	Common ^[9]	Not required	-
Need for Mitomycin C	70-90% ^[18]	Not required	-
Risk of Iris Plateau	1-2% ^[14]	0%	< 0.05

Chi-square Test

The Chi-square test was employed to compare the incidence of complications among the three groups. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the incidence of all complications between the groups ($P < 0.05$). This suggests that the innovative valve technique was safer than traditional surgery in terms of reducing the incidence of complications.

Corneal Health and Comparison with Global Studies

Glaucoma can negatively impact the cornea, the transparent protective layer of the eye. Here are some effects glaucoma can have on the cornea:

1. **Corneal Thinning:** Glaucoma can cause corneal thickening, which can affect IOP measurement. This can lead to problems in the diagnosis and treatment of glaucoma.

2. **Change in Corneal Shape:** Glaucoma can alter the shape of the cornea, which can cause blurred vision or astigmatism.
3. **Reduction in Corneal Endothelial Cell Count:** Glaucoma can damage corneal endothelial cells, which are essential for maintaining corneal transparency. A reduction in the number of these cells can lead to corneal edema (swelling of the cornea) and changes in vision.
4. **Changes in Descemet's Membrane:** Glaucoma can damage Descemet's membrane, the outermost layer of the cornea, making it more fragile.
5. **Corneal Hemorrhage:** In some cases, glaucoma can cause bleeding in the cornea, which can lead to changes in vision.^[22]

Corneal Endothelial Cells

- **Before Surgery:** The average number of corneal endothelial cells in females was 400 ± 1520

cells/mm², and in males, it was 400 ± 2200 cells/mm². The t-test showed no statistically significant difference between males and females ($P = 1$).

- **After Surgery:** No significant decrease in corneal endothelial cell count was observed in the groups utilizing the innovative valve technique ($P = 0.23$ for Group 1 and $P = 0.37$ for Group 2). This suggests that the innovative valve technique may contribute to better preservation of corneal endothelial cell integrity compared to traditional surgery. In the control group, a significant decrease in endothelial cell count was observed after surgery ($P = 0.02$).

Comparison with Global Studies

- **Broadway et al. (2004)^[1]:** A study by Broadway and colleagues found that the rate of corneal endothelial cell loss after conventional trabeculectomy reached 10% during the first year post-surgery. The researchers indicated that this loss could impair corneal function and increase the risk of corneal edema over the long term.
- **Khaw et al. (1992)^[13]:** Another study by Khaw and colleagues showed that using mitomycin C during surgery increased the rate of endothelial cell loss by up to 20%. The researchers attributed this negative effect to the anti-mitotic properties of mitomycin C, which affect the ability of endothelial cells to regenerate and repair.

In our study, no significant loss of endothelial cells was observed in the groups utilizing the innovative valve technique, indicating that this technique provides better protection for endothelial cells and minimizes the risk of damage during surgery. This positive effect can be explained by several factors:

- **Reduced Surgical Trauma:** The valve reduces the need for manipulation of corneal tissue during surgery, minimizing the risk of direct endothelial cell damage.
- **Controlled Aqueous Humor Flow:** The valve contributes to maintaining IOP within a safe range and prevents large pressure fluctuations, minimizing mechanical stress on endothelial cells and helping to preserve their integrity.
- **No Need for Mitomycin C:** The valve eliminates the need for mitomycin C, a drug known for its harmful effects on corneal endothelial cells and its potential to lead to long-term loss of these cells.

Corneal Thickness

Corneal Thinning: One of the effects of glaucoma surgery can be corneal thinning. This thinning can occur due to changes in intraocular pressure or damage to corneal cells. Reducing eye pressure after surgery can lead to a reduction in stroma swelling (the middle layer of the cornea), which in turn leads to corneal thinning.

- **Before Surgery:** The average central corneal thickness in patients under 70 years old was 570 ± 30 micrometers, while in patients above 70 years

old, it was 500 ± 30 micrometers. The t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the groups ($P < 0.0001$). After surgery, a slight, non-significant decrease in central corneal thickness was observed in the groups utilizing the innovative valve technique ($P = 0.11$ for Group 1 and $P = 0.08$ for Group 2), while a significant decrease was observed in the control group ($P = 0.03$).

Comparison with Global Studies

- **Jampel et al. (2005)^[2]:** A study by Jampel and colleagues found that central corneal thickness significantly increased after conventional trabeculectomy and that this increase can persist for several years post-surgery. This is attributed to corneal edema due to changes in IOP and corneal inflammation that can occur after surgery.

In our study, a non-significant decrease in corneal thickness was observed after surgery using the innovative valve technique, suggesting that this technique may help prevent corneal edema after surgery and better preserve corneal function. This can be explained by the valve contributing to controlling aqueous humor flow and preventing large fluctuations in IOP, reducing the risk of corneal edema.

DISCUSSION

5.1. Positive Impact of the Novel Valve Technique on the Cornea and Interpretation of the Results

Comparison with global studies indicates that the innovative valve technique achieves better results in terms of corneal health compared to conventional trabeculectomy. This can be explained by the benefits provided by the valve, including:

- **Controlled Aqueous Humor Flow:** The valve contributes to maintaining IOP within a safe range and prevents large pressure fluctuations, minimizing the risk of corneal endothelial cell damage and corneal edema.
- **Reduced Inflammation:** The valve minimizes the risk of inflammation due to its unique design and the use of the patient's own tissue, contributing to the preservation of endothelial cell integrity and function.
- **No Need for Mitomycin C:** The valve eliminates the need for mitomycin C, a drug known for its harmful effects on corneal endothelial cells.

Comparison with Non-penetrating Surgeries

Non-penetrating surgeries are characterized by being less invasive and having a lower risk of complications compared to trabeculectomy. However, they may not be effective in all cases, particularly in advanced glaucoma or when significant IOP reduction is needed. The innovative valve technique combines the advantages of non-penetrating surgeries with the effectiveness of trabeculectomy. It is less invasive than conventional trabeculectomy, achieving significant IOP reduction while minimizing the incidence of complications.

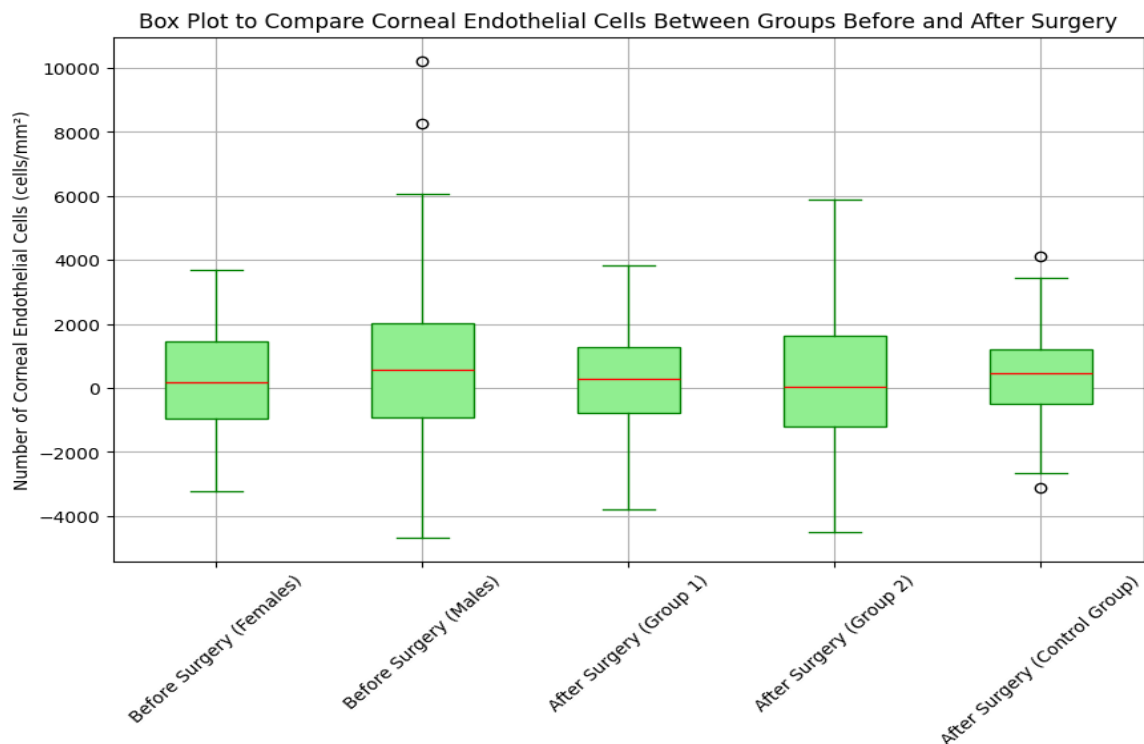
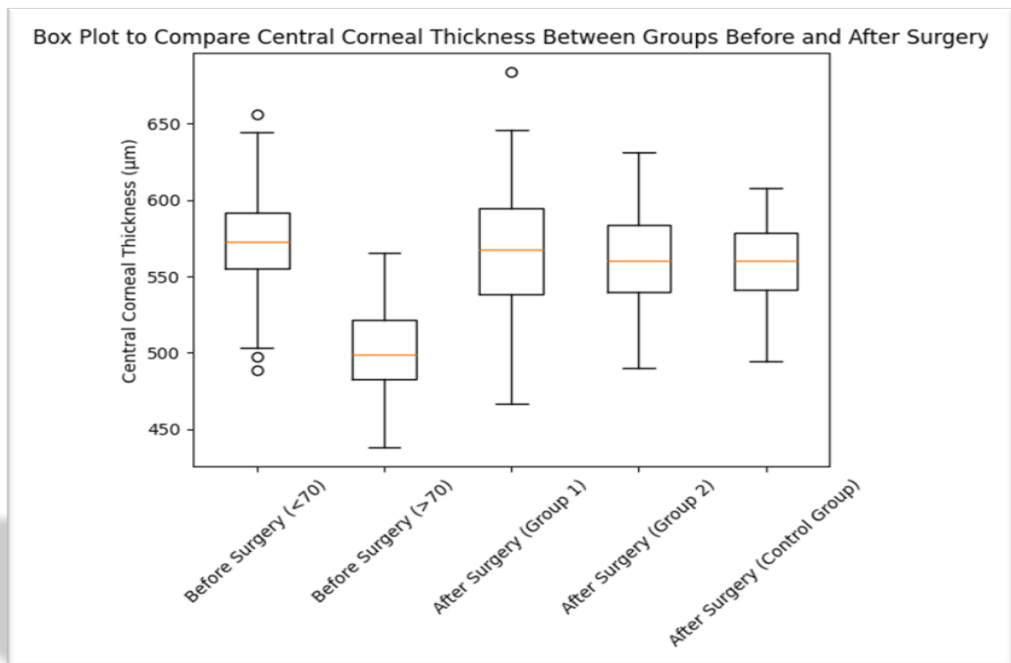
It seems that this method can be used for various types of glaucoma, but extensive studies need to be conducted before its use.

Therapeutic Uses: The innovative valve can be used to treat a wide range of glaucoma conditions, including:

- **Open-angle glaucoma:** This is the most common type of glaucoma, occurring due to the gradual blockage of the aqueous humor drainage channels.

- **Angle-closure glaucoma:** This type of glaucoma occurs due to the sudden blockage of the aqueous humor drainage channels.
- **Secondary glaucoma:** This type of glaucoma occurs as a result of another condition affecting the eye, such as cataracts or uveitis.

Schematic Diagrams



LIMITATIONS

One of the main limitations of this study is the small sample size. A longer follow-up period is also needed for a more accurate long-term evaluation of the results. Future research should consider a larger sample size and a longer follow-up period to obtain more accurate and comprehensive results.

CONCLUSION

The innovative inverted autovalue from the scleral flap represents a significant advancement in trabeculectomy surgery, ushering in a new era of safe and effective treatment for glaucoma. The results of this study indicate that the use of the innovative valve can reduce the incidence of complications associated with conventional trabeculectomy and improve corneal safety and function.

Recommendations

- Conduct further clinical studies with larger sample sizes and longer follow-up periods to confirm the long-term effectiveness and safety of the innovative valve.
- Compare the innovative valve technique with other types of glaucoma surgeries, such as non-penetrating surgeries and aqueous shunt tube implantation.
- Study the effect of the innovative valve technique on different types of glaucoma, age groups, and health conditions.
- Develop training programs for surgeons to ensure mastery of the surgical technique using the innovative valve.
- Raise awareness among physicians and patients about the benefits of the innovative valve technique.

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