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COVERAGE OF COMPLEX LIMB WOUNDS: THE PLASTIC SURGEON TO THE RESCUE

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Limb trauma is a global health concern and indeed is fairly commonly tackled by the military surgeon. While some patients have associated life threatening injuries, a lot of them have isolated but usually complex soft tissue defects. Decision making for managing these patients often requires the aggressive plastic surgeon to step in. From appropriate debridement to arduous but gratifying reconstruction can be planned right at reception of the patient. We in the Indian Armed Forces have taken the initiative to mitigate the suffering of the combatant by this technique and present our 3-year experience of management of such injuries at a large tertiary referral trauma center. 942 consecutive patients with major limb trauma were included in the study. At reception, life saving measures were instituted first followed by limb saving action. Wounds were prepared by debridement during which devitalized tissue was excised. Immobilisation of possible fractures was then done. If there was no exposure of bone, the wounds were resurfaced with autogenous split thickness skin grafts. If bone was exposed, flaps were raised and inset into the defects. If at debridement, it was thought that a second-look was required, then the definitive coverage of the wound was effected then. Lives and limbs were both saved with such timely intervention.

It is indeed a tough challenge to treat patients with major limb trauma. If the patient presents early, the services of the aggressive plastic surgeon are paramount in markedly reducing mortality and significant morbidity in the wounded soldier and the members of his family.

Biography

Vijay Langer completed his medical schooling and postdoctoral studies from the prestigious Armed Forces Medical college, Pune, India. He was further a clinical Fellow in Body Contouring following massive weight loss at Iowa City, USA, in 2009. Awarded the Gold Medal in Plastic Surgery by the National Board of Examinations, he is presently Professor and posted to Army Hospital (Research and Referral), New Delhi, which is the largest hospital of the Indian Armed Forces. He has 57 publications including 22 PubMed indexed articles, one chapter in a book, 29 podium presentations in conferences, and is a member of the editorial board of four journals.

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