



Outstanding research paper awards of the *Journal of the Chinese Medical Association* in 2020

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At the end of this 2021 year, we would like to introduce the winner of the 2020 *Journal of the Chinese Medical Association Outstanding Research Paper Award*. The honor was given to Dr. Yen-Chi Chen for his excellent work, which was selected from all original articles published in the 2020 print issues of the *Journal of the Chinese Medical Association (JCMA)*.¹⁻⁶ This article was entitled “Developing a novel meatal areolar tissue autograft for minimally invasive tympanoplasty.”⁶ Dr. Chen won this credit at the Annual Meeting of the Chinese Medical Association on August 7, 2021, held at Taipei, Taiwan. The emergence of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (coronavirus disease 2019, COVID-19) pandemic in Taiwan affect all of us and significantly impact healthcare, medical science as well as face-to-face connection⁷⁻¹⁰; therefore, the annual meeting was held by virtual meeting.

The authors tried to use the new technology in the management of patients with chronic otitis media (COM), which is a bothersome disease characterized as an enduring inflammation of the middle ear and mastoid cavity with the presence of a tympanic membrane perforation, and possibly leading to progressive degradation of the middle ear cavity and its components, causing conductive and mixed hearing losses.^{6,11} Although tympanoplasty with temporalis fascia (TF), areolar tissue, perichondrium, or cartilage has been widely performed in patients with COM, with the aim of reducing infection recurrence and refining hearing, and in turn improving social development and quality of life, there is no doubt that several postoperative morbidities or complications, such as keloid formation, perichondritis, recurrence of disease, continuous conductive hearing loss, the need of intraoperative and postoperative ventilation tube insertion, and occurrence of severe infection or pain to the patients occur in certain percentage of the patients, which was reported to be ranged from 0% to 47.1%.^{11,12} Based on absence of 100% satisfactory therapeutic effects of tympanoplasty, it suggests the

importance of continuous evolvement overtime about novel and/or modified methods of tympanoplasty for dealing with COM patients. We are happy to learn that the authors developed a relatively novel and modified method as transmeatal approach with meatal areolar tissue (MAT) reconstruction, modified from the canonical endaural tympanoplasty and attempted to overcome the limitations of conventional tympanoplasty for the treatment of COM patients.⁶ As predicted, the authors found this transmeatal approach method with a MAT graft could not only significantly reduce the severity of trauma (to avoid external skin wounds) as well as surgery-related morbidity but also had a better cosmetic result; additionally, this modified technique is easy and minimally invasive and of the most importance, the therapeutic effects are similar or not inferior to those done by other types which need more invasive procedures.⁶ Based on impressive findings of the current study, it was worthy of further discussion.

It is well known as in other surgical fields, a trend toward more minimally invasive techniques^{12,13} has led to transmeatal or endoscopic ear surgery becoming increasing popular. The authors also followed the trend to using the minimally invasive approach as transmeatal approach for performing tympanoplasty to their patients.⁶ Classically, the posterior auricular, endaural, and a transmeatal (transcanal) incisions are most commonly used surgical approaches for tympanoplasty, suggesting that each approach used in tympanoplasty has its own advantages and limitations, contributing to fully understanding that no single approach can be claimed as the best approach for all types of tympanic membrane perforations.¹⁴ Dr. Farrior found that the transmeatal approach should be reserved for smaller central perforations with limited risk of squamous ingrowth into the middle ear, and additionally, the ear canal should be enlarge enough to permit the use of a speculum to expose the entire perforation. All have suggested that each approach should be based on the careful preoperative evaluation. As shown by authors, only patients with COM accompanied with small perforations were elected into the study group to be treated with this novel transmeatal approach with MAT reconstruction.⁶ It is not surprising to have an excellent outcome in their study.

Besides the above-mentioned approach influencing the postoperative outcome, graft choice is also a key contributing factor.¹² In the current study, the authors used a novel MAT autograft as a graft for tympanoplasty.⁶ Conventionally, autologous graft, most commonly made from temporal fascia or tragal/conchal perichondrium, has the following advantages, such as ready availability, biocompatibility, and high economic, although some

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Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the subject matter or materials discussed in this article.

Journal of Chinese Medical Association. (2021) 84: 1071-1072.

Received October 7, 2021; accepted October 7, 2021.

doi: 10.1097/JCMA.0000000000000639.

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morbidities may occur during the harvesting autologous grafts, such as pain, cosmetic problems, and additional scarring.¹² Dr. Chen and colleagues using MAT as autologous graft for tympanoplasty take the following advantages, including the enlargement of the external meatus by the concurrent meatoplasty and graft harvesting without the extra- or over-incision of underlying soft tissue, resulting in a smaller wound; without a postoperative mastoid bandage, decreasing postoperative discomforts of patients, such as head tightness or wound pain; with minimizing the risk of therapeutic failure, such as persistent residual tympanic perforations; with the minimization of periauricular hematoma or bleeding, even for those patients with continuous medication of antiplatelet or anticoagulant agents.⁶

We congratulate the winner of the 2020 *Journal of the Chinese Medical Association Outstanding Research Paper Award*, and welcome more and more excellent articles to be published in the *Journal of the Chinese Medical Association*.¹⁵ With your continuous supports, the better care for patients can be easily achieved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article was supported by grants from the Taiwan Ministry of Science and Technology, Executive Yuan, Taiwan (MOST 109-2314-B-075B-014-MY2 and MOST 110-2314-B-075-016-MY3), and Taipei Veterans General Hospital (V110C-082, and VGH109E-005-5). The authors appreciate the support from Female Cancer Foundation, Taipei, Taiwan.

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