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Balm for burns victims

New method to grow skin in lab for those who need grafting

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NOW, A burns victim can get a skin graft without waiting for a donation.

The only burns hospital in the city is close to developing a technique to clinically grow skin in the laboratory.

This will help patients with more than 30 per cent burns injury, who either succumb or contract serious infections.

Over 10,000 new cases of burns are treated in Mumbai annually on an average.

Last month, the National Burns Centre (NBC) in Airoli started work on a project where a small patch of skin from a burns patient can be multiplied by 500 times clinically and grafted. (See 'How new skin is developed')

"We are just weeks away from developing the skin patch after which we would start the trial on patients. The technique will benefit thousands of burns patients who have suffered severe burns and need skin grafting," said Dr S.M. Keswani, trustee and burns surgeon, NBC.

Patients requiring grafting had to depend on skin taken from a deceased's body. At the oldest skin bank in the city,



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civic-run Sion hospital, only 178 skin donations were received last year.

This new technique would reduce dependence of patients on skin donations.

Another advantage is that the new skin grown would be the patient's own.

Sometimes the recipient's body refuses the donor's skin — a chance that is eliminated



Keratinocytes culture isn't a new technology but it isn't available in the city. It is a good technique since a small patch of skin can be grown into a bigger sheath. The chances of rejection and infections are lesser too but we would have to wait until success is proven.

-DR ARVIND VARTAK, head of burns unit at Masina and Wadia Children's hospitals and ex-president of National Academy of Burns, India.



in this technique. "The chances of infection are the least, the skin is grown and grafted within the same premises," said Dr Keswani.

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