

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Human Stromal Vascular Fraction from Different Methods of Liposuction Short Title: Stromal Fraction from Liposuction Types

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Abstract

Background: Although the widespread use for harvesting fat, liposuction is not represented by a single procedure and, in the absence of evidence based guidelines regarding cell based therapies, different protocols may be employed to extract the Stromal Vascular Fraction (SVF) and its cellular subpopulations. Usually the tissue-harvesting procedures has been underestimated as a factor to impact the outcomes.

Methods: 4 methods of liposuction were employed in triplicate in 16 patient candidates for liposuction:

- Manual liposuction with 10.0 mL Luer-Lok syringe and 2.0 mm blunt tip cannula
- Manual liposuction with 60.0 mL syringe and 2.5 mm cannula
- Power-Assisted Liposuction (PAL) (Vibrofit®- Faga Medical) set at 3.000 cycles and 3.0 mm cannula and
- Suction-Assisted Liposuction (SAL) (Nevonix® 3003 model) and 4.0 mm cannula

They were divided in 3 groups, according to the aspirated volume:- group I: 20.0 mL, group II: 60.0 mL and group III: 120.0 mL, obtaining 48 samples for analysis. Cellular quantification, viability and mesenchymal characterization was performed in the extracted SVF in all samples and the results were compared by Pearson statistical test and logistic probability, adopting α significant level above 0.05 ($\alpha > 0.05$).

Results: The worst cell yielding was obtained with SAL and 4 mm blunt tip cannulas in all volumes. The manual method with 10.0 mL seringe/2.0 mm cannula and PAL/3.0 mm cannula showed better cellular SVF extraction in all groups, with no differences statistically significant between them. The cell frequencies of these best scores showed an exponential increase with increasing volumes from 2.900.000 cells/20 mL group to 18.500.000/60 mL group (6.4xx) and to 380.000.000/120 mL group (20.5xx).

Conclusion: The mechanical stress applied over the subcutaneous tissue may impact the cell yielding of the extracted SVF. Syringes with small cannulas (2.0 mm), and/or *in-vivo* emulsification of the adipose tissue through PAL seem to have a positive effect, optimizing future liposuction protocols.

Keywords: Liposuction; Stromal vascular fraction; Mesenchymal stem cell; Guideline protocol

Abbreviations: PAL: Power-Assisted Liposuction; SAL: Suction-Assisted Liposuction; SVF: Stromal Vascular Fraction; ADSCs: Adipose-Derived Stem Cells; MSCs: Mesenchymal Stem Cells; BMI: Body Mass Index

Introduction

The identification of multipotent cells within the adipose tissue, then named Adipose-Derived Stem Cells (ADSCs) [1], have opened a new promising field in fat biology and into the frontiers of regenerative medicine [2]. After decades dealing with liposuction and fat grafting [3,4], we are able to harvest fat tissue in almost any desirable volume, representing an unprecedented source of stem cells.

The practical application of cell-based therapy is still limited and under regulations [5], but seems to be a one-way road for several diseases and in the field of tissue engineering [6]. Hundreds of articles about cells extraction to therapeutic purposes have been published in all specialties employing the total SVF or isolated ADSCs with promising outcomes.

These multiple potential applications insert a concern about the quality and quantity of the aspirated subcutaneous fat as a source of

donor cells. Although the widespread use for harvesting fat, liposuction is not represented by a single procedure and, in the absence of evidence based guidelines, different protocols may be employed with the same purpose using all the fat obtained [7] or even just the saline/blood fraction of the lipoaspirates [8] but usually the tissue-harvesting procedures has been underestimated as a factor to impact the outcomes.

Another discussion is the possibility of fast SVF extraction and application [9], allowing a one-step procedure without cell manipulation,

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preserving all the cellular components of the extracted SVF and eventually favoring its biological behavior at the transplanted site.

Also the laboratorial protocols for extracting the SVF must be properly evaluated, from simple cells counting up to its characterization as mesenchymal tissue, as well as employing enzymatic tissue digestion through collagenases, limited by the presence of possible xenogeneic components, which pose certain risks and safety issues to clinical scenarios [10].

The objective of this article was to analyze the cell frequencies and biological characteristics of the SVF obtained from different methods and volumes of liposuction, regarding a one-step protocol to be followed in experimental and clinical cell-based therapies, in an attempt to optimize possible translational procedures.

Materials and Methods

The experimental protocol was approved by the Institutional Research Board. 16 women candidates for liposuction, from 20 to 60 years were selected, recording age and Body Mass Index (BMI). All of them were previously informed about the nature of the study, limited to lab protocols, and the obtained tissue would be discharged and could not be reutilized. They were divided in 3 groups, according to the volume of aspirated fat, performed just at the beginning of the surgery – group I: 20.0 mL, group II: 60.0 mL and group III: 120.0 mL. In each group, 3 samples of the pre-determined volume were obtained by 4 different methods as follows:

1. Manual liposuction with 10.0 mL Luer-Lok syringe and 2.0 mm blunt tip cannula
2. Manual liposuction with 60.0 mL syringe and 2.5 mm cannula
3. Power-Assisted Liposuction (PAL) (Vibrofit®- Faga Medical) set at 3.000 cycles and 3.0 mm cannula and
4. Suction-Assisted Liposuction (SAL) (Nevoni® 3003 model) and 4.0 mm cannula

Twelve samples of each method were obtained for analysis (n=48) (Table 1). The samples manually obtained were left in the syringes that were properly capped and the mechanically fat aspirated was collected directly into a sterile fluid collector, avoiding any manipulation or exposition. All samples were obtained from the anterior and lateral abdominal wall, previously infiltrated with a saline and epinephrine at the proportion 1:1 solution in a standard fashion.

Groups/Volumes	Methods	Samples/Patients
I 20 mL	A-syringe 10 mL/ 2.0 mm cannula	06/02
	B-syringe 60 mL/ 2.5 mm cannula	06/02
	C-PAL/3.0 mm cannula	03/01
	D-SAL/ 4.0 mm cannula	03/01
II 60 mL	A	03/01
	B	03/01
	C	06/02
	D	03/01
III 120 mL	A	03/01
	B	03/01
	C	03/01
	D	06/02
Total		48/16

PAL=Power Assisted Liposuction; SAL=Suction Assisted Liposuction

Table 1: Distribution of the methods and samples obtained from each group of liposuction, pre-determined by the aspirated volume.

Isolation of SVF

The samples were mechanically homogenized at the original initial volumes and, as a representative volume for analysis, 10.0% of the volume was removed, obtaining 2.0 mL, 6.0 mL and 12.0 mL. To each representative volume was added a type IV collagenase (*Clostridium histolyticum* - Sigma Aldrich) in a ratio of 1:3 (fat: collagenase). The mixture was incubated at 37.0°C at 5.0% CO₂ for 2 hours, followed by centrifugation at 800 g for 10 minutes at 23.0°C, obtaining a final pellet corresponding to the SVF. The pellet was resuspended in 10.0 mL of culture medium and processed as follows:

- 1) 1.0 mL was transferred to cell counting, with 10.0 µL placed in a Neubauer chamber for quantification in replicates
- 2) 1.0 mL was for immunophenotyping analysis and
- 3) The remainder was transferred to Petakas for cell culture and isolation of the ADSCs for cell growth kinetics and viability studies

Immunophenotype analysis-mesenchymal tissue characterization

The sample cells were labeled with specific monoclonal antibodies to CD14, CD45, CD49e, CD31, CD29, CD90, CD51/61, CD54, CD166, CD13, anti-HLA-ABC, CD34, CD44, CD105, CD146, CD73, anti-HLA-DR PI to designate groups Cell Differentiation (CD) linked to fluorochromes.

Cell viability and quantification

The SVF cells viability was performed using the “vital dye” trypan blue, which marks only dead cells. The cell frequencies were performed using the Neubauer chamber, based on counting the number of cells in a defined square (n) and extended to the total number of cells at the sample, using the standard formula:

$$\text{Cellular Concentration} = n \times \text{Dilution factor} \times 10^4$$

Culture and expansion of ADSC

The cells were cultured and expanded in Petakas containing fluid culture medium ALPHA MEM with 10.0% v/v fetal bovine serum and 1.0% v/v of Ampicillin and Streptomycin. After reaching approximately 90.0% of confluence, the cell lines were “trypsinized” with trypsin-EDTA and seeded on another Petaka, with subsequent passages and culture expansions.

Growth kinetics of ADSCs

For the cell growth kinetics and Population Doubling Time (PDT), cell cultures in Petakas should start from an initial standard concentration of 2.0×10^5 . Quantification of living cells by means of trypan blue was performed on days 2-20 for each step of cell expansion, according to the equation below, where 3.32 is a constant value, Nh is the number of cells collected at the end time T2, Ni is the number of cells inoculated at starting time T1.

$$PDT = \frac{1}{3.32 \frac{(\log Nh - \log Ni)}{(T2-T1)}}$$

Statistical analysis

A database was built in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which

was exported to the statistical programs Minitab 17 and OriginPro 8. A common descriptive statistical analysis was performed with mean and standard deviation values and submitted to Anderson-Darling normality test (with $p > 0.10$ for parametric data). Sample's cell counting on the different lipoaspirates, growth kinetics and relative ADSC quantifications by Immunophenotyping were compared by Pearson statistical test and logistic probability, adopting a significant level above 0.05 ($\alpha > 0.05$).

Results

Cells quantification and viability

There were no statistically significant differences in cell frequencies relative to age and BMI in all groups.

Consistently, the worst cell yielding was obtained with SAL and 4 mm blunt tip cannulas in all groups. In contrary, the manual method with 10.0 mL syringe/2.0 mm cannula and PAL/3.0 mm cannula showed better cellular SVF extraction in all groups, with no differences statistically significant between them (Figures 1-3). Comparing the average cell frequencies of these best scores, there was an exponential increase with increasing volumes from 2.900.000 cells/20 mL group to 18.500.000/60 mL group (6.4xx) and to 380.000.000/120 mL group (20.5xx).

The average viability was $98.0 \pm 1\%$ for all samples.

Culture/expansion and growth kinetics of ADSC

Up to the 9th expansion, the cells exhibited adhesion and proliferation behavior within the Petakas. As the cells were expanded and isolated, the rate of cell growth increased in exponential order, as shown in Figure 4.

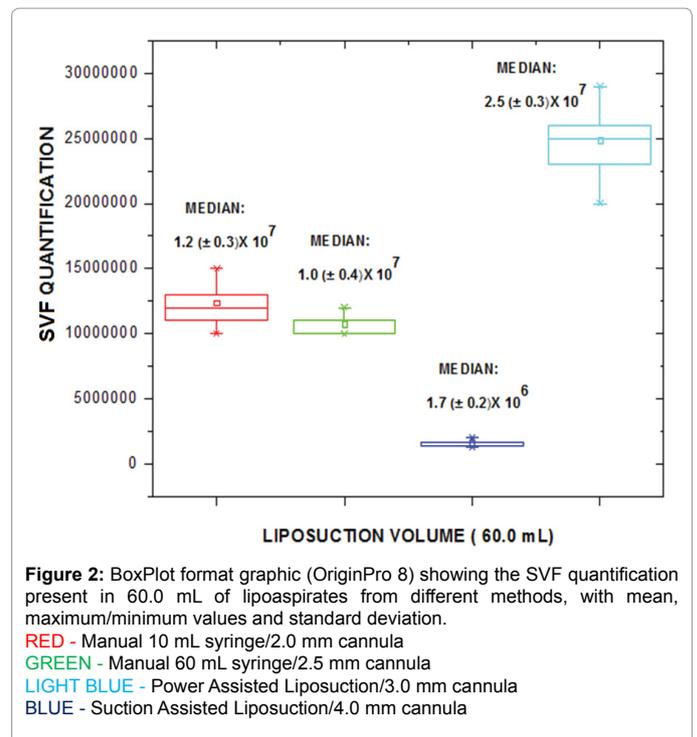
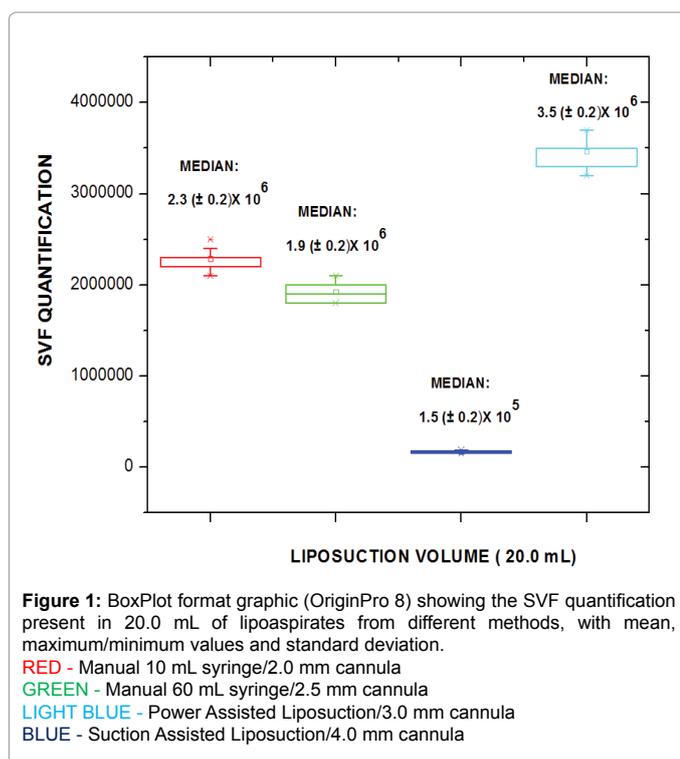


Figure 2: BoxPlot format graphic (OriginPro 8) showing the SVF quantification present in 60.0 mL of lipoaspirates from different methods, with mean, maximum/minimum values and standard deviation.

RED - Manual 10 mL syringe/2.0 mm cannula
 GREEN - Manual 60 mL syringe/2.5 mm cannula
 LIGHT BLUE - Power Assisted Liposuction/3.0 mm cannula
 BLUE - Suction Assisted Liposuction/4.0 mm cannula

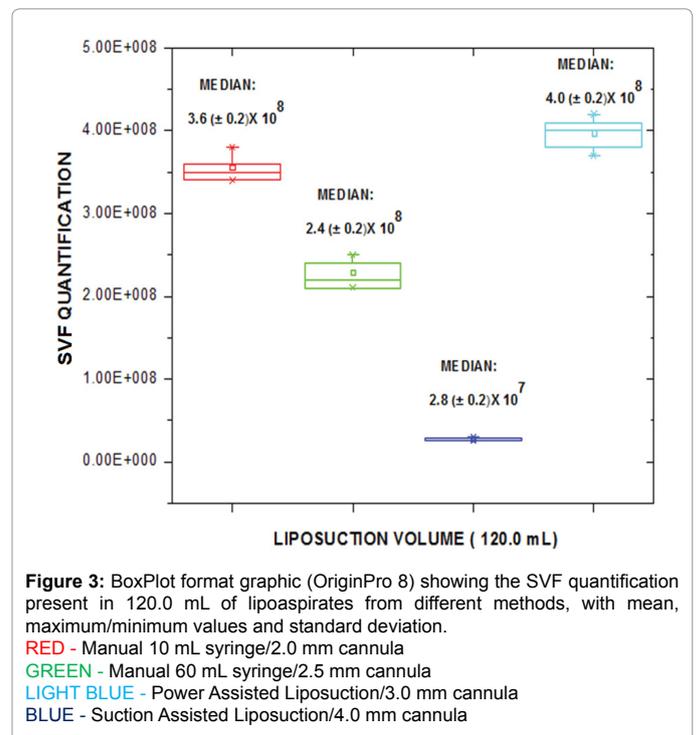
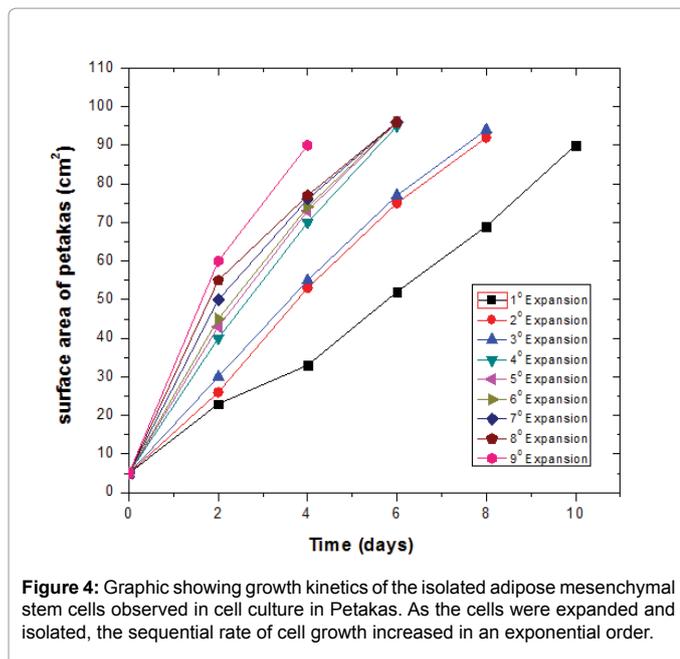


Figure 3: BoxPlot format graphic (OriginPro 8) showing the SVF quantification present in 120.0 mL of lipoaspirates from different methods, with mean, maximum/minimum values and standard deviation.

RED - Manual 10 mL syringe/2.0 mm cannula
 GREEN - Manual 60 mL syringe/2.5 mm cannula
 LIGHT BLUE - Power Assisted Liposuction/3.0 mm cannula
 BLUE - Suction Assisted Liposuction/4.0 mm cannula

Immunophenotype analysis

To all samples the cells analyzed by flow cytometry displayed expression of ADSC through specific markers, with mesenchymal cell marker panel being positive for the majority of the labeled antibodies, with the marker CD44 most significant quantitatively. The mean percentage of ADSC in the samples was of 30 ± 6 (Figures 5 and 6).



Discussion

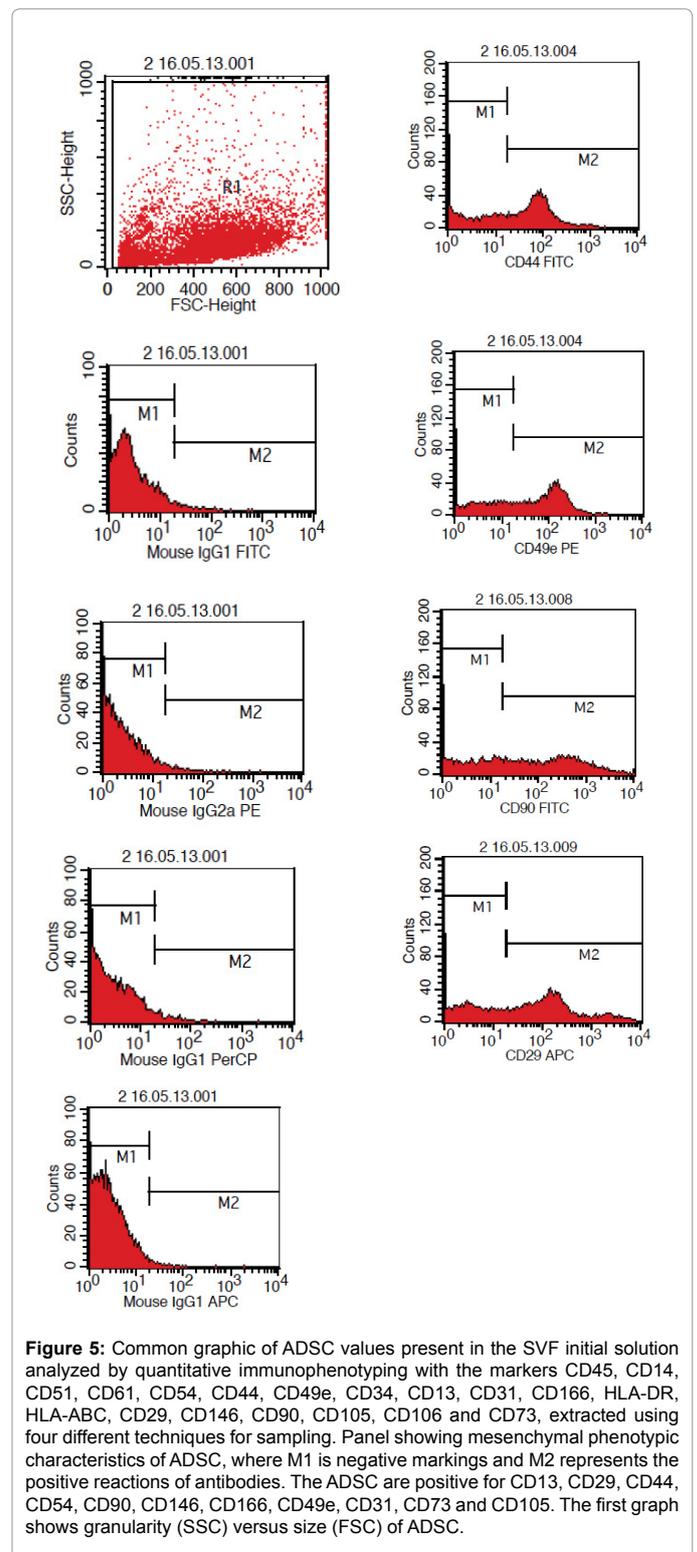
In a review article about adipose tissue and stem cells, Ferris, et al. [11] employed an instigating title that translates the way we face adiposity nowadays: “Once fat was fat and that was that”. Initially seen just as energy store and short after as a true secretory tissue, now adipose tissue represents a smorgasbord of different functional and stem cells, more properly named as Adipose Tissue Complex [12], changing our concepts relative to fat depots, by now understood under a macro anatomical vision.

Derived from the mesodermal layer, adipose tissue contains a supportive SVF, a heterogeneous undifferentiated mesenchymal cell population that includes not only adipose stromal and hematopoietic stem and progenitor cells but also endothelial cells, fibroblasts, leukocytes, pre-adipocytes and cellular pericytes among others [13,14].

The presented results confirm that all the most common methods of liposuction employed were efficient to harvest the SVF from the subcutaneous layer. The immunophenotyping analysis were in accordance with the statements for mesenchymal tissue characterization [15] and the quality of the cellular population obtained in all samples were similar.

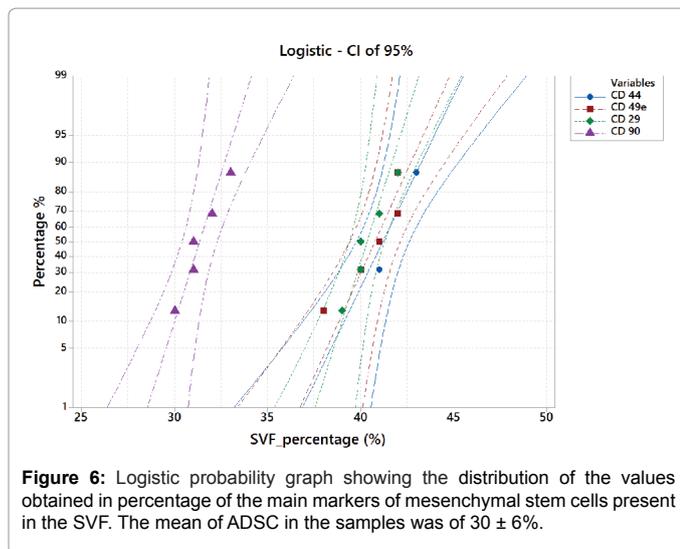
The cellular quantification revealed a superior cellular yield with the manual methods using 10.0 mL syringe/2.0 mm cannulas and PAL, optimizing the choice method in this direction, with important clinical relevance.

In terms of cell frequencies, one could speculate that the use of smaller cannulas promotes a greater adipose tissue fragmentation, resulting in a relative higher surface area of adipocytes fractions and its corresponding vascular fraction, allowing an increased enzymatic activity to extract the SVF. According to Kurita, et al., [16] ADSCs did not shift between the adipose and fluid portions just by centrifugation, likely because ADSCs are resident in or strongly adhered to the adipose tissues. This also could be related to the concept of “bloody niche”, where adipose stem cells are found in the wall of blood vessels that supply white adipose depots but are absent from blood vessels that supply other



tissues [17]. Still speculating, the same interpretation could explain the results with PAL, the emulsification promoted by the technique [18] would facilitate the cellular extraction, a mechanical component to be better understood.

The use of larger cannulas and high negative pressure methods



obviously can improve the harvesting volume/time ratio, but also produces more tissue damage and is less selective, increasing the presence of blood and interstitial tissue in the samples, besides the presence of larger clusters of fat, possibly hindering the enzymatic laboratorial processes or even a mechanical dissociation for cell extraction. Another aspect could be related to the barometric forces, as described by Mojallal, et al. [19], stating that pump-assisted technologies could decrease the viability of nucleated cells and also showing superior cell yielding of SVF using PAL.

Still controversial, the anatomical donor site could impact the cell frequencies on the samples. All samples of this study were obtained from the abdominal wall, described as a superior donor site in other studies [20,21].

Increasing volumes in fact give us an exponential yield on cell frequencies in the average of the best methods reported from 2.900.000 cells/20 mL samples up to 380.000.000 cells/120 mL samples remembering that this population corresponds to the estimated total SVF cellular population. For therapeutic purposes we still don't know what this means exactly, but it seems that by now the prevailing philosophy is "more is better" and we may just to compare cells frequencies and methods' efficacy.

The first aspect to be considered, for intended one step procedure, is that this counting refers to all non-buoyant cellular fraction represented by the final pellet obtained. Studies have estimated that lipoaspirates provides ADSCs at a frequency up to 1:1.500 cells, exceeding the frequency of Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSCs) from bone marrow 500 to 1000 fold, with 1 g of adipose tissue yielding nearly 5.000 ADSCs [22]. A bone marrow transplant of 100 mL contains an average of 6×10^8 nucleated cells, but only 0.001 to 0.01% corresponds to stem cells [23]. Suga, et al. [24], analyzing lipoaspirates obtained from SAL and 2.5 mm cannulas, reported that the ratio of adipose stromal cells to adipocytes was found to be much larger than previously described, estimating an adipocyte number of 1 million per 1 mL of suctioned adipose tissue, with 37.0% of ADSCs and speculating that this number in intact adipose tissue may be similar to that of adipocytes.

The cell frequencies and relative average ADSCs in the samples in this study (30.0%) are on pair with these more recent reports, but with an important difference relative to the volumes employed. Tabit, et al.

[25] states a minimum starting lipoaspirate volume of 250 mL required for a sufficient yield of ASCs, expecting 1×10^7 to 1×10^8 ADSCs from this volume. Jurgen, et al. [26] reported 2.6 to 10.2×10^6 stem cells from 100 g of adipose tissue, stating that this amount appears to be sufficient for cell based therapies and that the yield of ADSCs is dependent on the tissue-harvesting site. Without setting numbers, Varma, et al. [27] reported that "Large volumes achieved with tumescent liposuction are needed to obtain enough ASCs in the operating room without the need for laboratory expansion". An important range in cell frequencies for total SVF and isolated ADSCs is observed in the reported studies, reflecting the lack of fully defined guidelines to the laboratorial protocols to optimize the cell extraction. Anyway, it's obvious that any one step procedure requires an SVF isolation containing sufficient progenitor cells with regenerative potential, a "gold number" which still remains unknown.

At the employed protocol, 2 main differences should be addressed:

1. The samples were not previously washed in a Phosphate Buffer Solution (PBS) as usually performed and the entire sample (the saline and the fatty portions) is processed after homogenization
2. Enzymatic digestion was employed a collagenase type IV enzyme

The first idea is to enhance the cellular concentration at the final pellet, preserving the fluid portions of the aspirates without a previous washing. This fluid portion is composed by the saline solution preoperatively injected, peripheral blood and cellular fractions from the subcutaneous layer, with a reported population of ADSCs [7]. Yoshimura, et al. [28] reported a comparable amount of ADSCs harvested from the fatty and fluid portions of lipoaspirates, showing that most of the fluid portion derived cells have similar surface markers, suggesting that they correspond to the same population derived from adipose portion. The presence of these cells seems to be related to the pericytes, i.e., perivascular cells associated with capillaries and microvessels which build up the vasculature in different tissues, including white adipose tissue that natively express MSC markers [29], supporting the hypothesis that an ancestor of the MSC is natively associated with the blood vessels wall [30].

Thus, is logical to speculate that these cells could be released into the fluid by the natural mechanical tissue injury during the liposuction. Considering this aspect and the literature discussed, the findings obtained suggest that different mechanical stresses over the subcutaneous tissue may impact the cell yielding of the resident SVF and its cellular subpopulations, a component not discussed in literature, focused in volumes and harvested sites. A similar concept has been described with the nano-fatgrafting technique, where the *ex-vivo* mechanical emulsification of lipoaspirates resulted in a SVF with higher proportions of progenitor, mesenchymal and multilineage cells, a stress induction that may enhance the regenerative potential of the non-expanded pellet [31].

Collagenase *Clostridium histolyticum* enzymatic digestion is the gold standard to almost all protocols for extracting the SVF from adipose tissue since Rodbell and Jones [32,33], and the collagenase type I is commonly employed for preliminary digestions [34]. The collagenase type IV was employed in a modified protocol by Yokomizo, et al. [35,36], where they observed a better performance of the cell extraction and confirmed in another study [37].

The relevance of this finding is limited by the guidelines governing the practical application of cell-based therapies [5,38] where enzymatic digestion has been considered to be more than minimally manipulated

procedure [39]. Initially expected as temporary, allowed in some countries and even incorporated to automatic devices [40], these restrictions probably are likely to remain in the long term, limiting their applications to non-human mammals, thus compromising a translational character [41,42]. Facing this, we've decided to adopt exclusively mechanical and enzymatic-free methods in future protocols [43].

Additional restrictions are imposed by primary operational rules defined as "Good Manufacturing Practices" and "Good Laboratory Practices" [44,45] to cell manufacture process, limiting the widespread application of standard protocols in a worldwide basis. In addition, restrictions are also reported about the common use of Fetal Bovine Serum in culture media [46], possible cellular karyotypic changes after sequential passages and contamination of the cellular populations [47].

The SVF direct use on cellular therapies seems to be, in the short term, the smartest strategy to widespread translational research in the regenerative medicine field. Its regenerative potential has been demonstrated in numerous diseases and applications [48-50] with similar therapeutic effects of ADSCs [51-53].

In addition, the preservation of the extracted SVF microenvironment could eventually favor its biological activity at the transplanted site, referring to the niche hypothesis concepts, were the stem cells itself, extracellular matrix and cell adhesion components among others factors have an important role to provide adequate physiological cues [54,55], with its biological behavior also being influenced by their local milieu [56].

Conclusion

The mechanical stress applied over the subcutaneous tissue may impact the cell yielding of the extracted SVF. Syringes with small cannulas (2.0 mm), and/or *in-vivo* emulsification of the adipose tissue through PAL seem to have a positive effect, optimizing future liposuction protocols. Further studies must address this stress induction aspect, as well as the cellular viability in such procedures. To obtain a translational character and using the SVF as therapeutic option, in the short term the one-step protocols must be focused on mechanical and enzymatic-free methods for cell extraction. To properly accomplish this, future studies should fulfill some important basic gaps in the scientific literature, citing mainly:

- 1) Establish a minimal cellular population required to therapeutic effects in cell based therapies
- 2) Confirm the SVF regenerative properties comparing its efficacy relative to isolated ADSCs and
- 3) Improve the actual rudimentary understanding of the concepts beyond the niche hypothesis and interactions of a regenerative cell mix on transplanted sites

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Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest between authors.

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