JOURNAL OF
Periodontology

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Effect of non-surgical therapy on plasma C-reactive protein levels in patients with periodontitis: A single arm prospective clinical trial

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Abstract

Background: This study aimed to evaluate the effect of scaling and root planing (SRP) on levels of plasma C-reactive protein (CRP).

Methods: A total of 30 patients with advanced periodontitis as determined by Clinical Periodontal Sum Score (CPSS) were recruited. Venous whole blood samples were drawn to obtain serum samples from all participants at baseline and 1 month after SRP (post-SRP). High-sensitivity CRP (hs-CRP) was measured by highly sensitive immunoturbidimetric assay. Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used for data analysis. Spearman rank correlation analysis was conducted to test the correlations between CPSS and hs-CRP at baseline and post-SRP.

Results: There was a statistically significant reduction in the post-SRP CPSS values from the baseline values ($z = 4.783$, $p < 0.0001$). Similarly, there was a statistically significant reduction in the post-SRP hs-CRP levels from the baseline levels ($z = 4.782$, $p < 0.0001$). Moreover, there was positive association between the baseline levels of CPSS and hs-CRP ($\rho = 0.5703$) and the post-SRP values of CPSS and hs-CRP ($\rho = 0.7507$).

Conclusion: The present study suggests that SRP can significantly reduce the levels of CRP.

KEYWORDS
clinical trial, C-reactive protein, periodontitis, systemic inflammation

1 | INTRODUCTION

Periodontitis is a chronic inflammatory disease characterized by the destruction of periodontal tissues that is attributed to a host immune-inflammatory response.[1] The local inflammatory response to bacteria or bacterial by-products is characterized by infiltration of the periodontal tissues of inflammatory cells including: polymorphonuclear neutrophils, macrophages, lymphocytes, and plasma cells.[2] Activated macrophages release cytokines, and the heterogeneity in response may be due to variable responses to a microbial challenge of inflammatory

mediators, such as prostaglandin E$_2$, interleukin-1, and tumor necrosis factor-α. These cytokines not only induce destruction of periodontal soft and hard tissues[3] but also initiate a systemic acute phase response. These proinflammatory cytokines enter the blood stream and often trigger a systemic inflammatory response, characterized by increased levels of acute phase proteins such as C-reactive protein (CRP) and related vascular dysfunction.[4,5] CRP production is part of the non-specific acute-phase response to most forms of inflammation, infection, and tissue damage.[4,5] CRP levels reflect the burden of inflammation within atherosclerotic lesions and is a biomarker used to measure the atherosclerotic plaques instability.[6] Current evidence supports the link between vascular events and periodontal disease. This is because oral bacteria can cause platelet aggregation and thromboembolic events via expression of proteins associated with platelet aggregation.[7,8] Furthermore, local periodontal inflammation has been associated with major adverse cardiovascular events through a mechanism of increased arterial inflammation.[9] Therefore, CRP levels have been suggested as one of the tools to assess the risk of cardiovascular disease due to periodontitis,[10] since CRP serum levels are elevated in patients with periodontal disease.[11,12] A meta-analysis investigating the relation of CRP with periodontitis have shown that CRP in patients with periodontitis of different severity is elevated compared with controls.[13] The benefit of periodontal therapy for patients with severe periodontitis was demonstrated compared with untreated subjects.[14]

Conversely, periodontal therapy itself is associated with short-term increases in systemic inflammation, likely due to subsequent bacteremias.[15,16] In patients with periodontitis, intensive non-surgical therapy (non-surgical therapy via full-mouth subgingival instrumentation delivered within a 6-h period) resulted in an acute systemic inflammatory response that lasted for $\approx$ 1 week.[17]

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to assess the effect of scaling and root planing (SRP) on serum CRP levels.

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 | Ethical approval and registration

Approval for the experimental protocol of the present study was obtained from the K. M. Shah Dental College and Hospital Institutional Review Board (SVUEC/ON/DENT/BN09/D1007), Sumandeep Vidyapeeth, Vadodara, Gujarat, India. This study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration for the ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects, as revised in 2013.

2.2 | Experimental design, eligibility criteria, and recruitment

This study was designed as a single arm prospective clinical trial to assess the effect of SRP on plasma CRP levels. Adult subjects who agreed to participate in this study were informed about the study design, risks, benefits, and timeline and provided informed consent before inclusion in the study. A comprehensive periodontal examination was performed including medical history as assessed via a questionnaire and a full-mouth periodontal probing chart on six sites/tooth performed. Subjects were recruited from consecutive individuals presenting at the Department of Periodontics, K.M. Shah Dental College and Hospital seeking periodontal care. The case definition of periodontitis was done in accordance with the 2017 World Workshop (2017 WWC).[1] The severity of the inflammation was assessed and categorized by Clinical Periodontal Sum Score (CPSS). The CPSS uses the following clinical parameters: probing depths (PD), bleeding on probing (BOP), suppuration, and furcation involvement (FI).[18]

The CPSS gives the ability to have a clinical periodontal sum score that includes parameters pointing to inflammation (BOP, SUP, and PD), which is currently not possible using the stage and grade classification. A total score was assigned to each patient through the weighted score for those clinical parameters. PD measurements were assessed by means of a manual, calibrated UNC 15-mm probe[¶]. Six sites per tooth (disto-buccal, mid-buccal, mesio-buccal, mesio-lingual, mid-lingual, disto-lingual) were examined in all teeth in the dentition. FI was assessed by Nabers probe[¶] using the Hamp classification.[19] CPSS was calculated through the sum of the number of sites per patient with PD $\geq$4 mm, the number of sites with BOP, the number of sites with visible suppuration on probing, and the number of FI exceeding grade 1. No CPSS cutoff limit was put to the inclusion of patients. In addition to the CPSS, patients were initially recruited if (i) they had at least 20 teeth present; and (ii) good general health as assessed by the examining clinician.

Subjects were excluded if they were (i) aged >70 years; (ii) pregnant or lactating females; (iii) females using contraceptive methods; (iv) suffering from systemic illnesses that may affect CRP levels; (v) underwent any antimicrobial treatment within the 3 months before the study; (vi) treated for periodontal disease in the previous 6 months; and (vii) heavy smokers (i.e., $\geq$10 cigarettes/day).

¶ Hu-Friedy 2N Nabers Probe (Hu-Friedy, Chicago, IL, USA).

These exclusion criteria were established to avoid the confounding effects of other diseases/conditions or the medications.

2.3 | Sample size

A previous study conducted to evaluate the systemic inflammatory response to non-surgical therapy was used to determine the sample size. Study power 80% with confidence interval 95% and alpha error 5% making 24 patients is minimum accepted number. Based on that, a total of 30 patients were recruited for the study to reach a significance level.[20] A total of 30 patients were included in this study, 19 of which were females, and 11 were males.

2.4 | Non-surgical therapy and serum collection

Periodontal status for study subjects was recorded by CPSS at baseline and 1-month after SRP using a calibrated periodontal probe. Examination was done by a single examiner (MS). All non-surgical therapy was provided by a single periodontal resident (BS). The study procedures were followed for each patient. Baseline examinations included CPSS and collection of whole blood sample. Blood samples were collected, centrifuged, serum was separated and transferred to transport media to be sent out to the laboratory. Coolants were used to transport the serum samples at 15–25°C. Once it reached the laboratory, high-sensitivity CRP (hs-CRP) was assessed using immunoturbidimetric assay.

After the baseline examination, subjects received phase I periodontal therapy, which included patient education and motivation, plaque control, supra- and subgingival SRP, elimination of all plaque-retentive sites on teeth and restorations, and supragingival polishing. All phase I procedures were performed by the same operator (BS). No antibiotics or anti-inflammatory medications were given during or after the treatment. Patients were seen 2 weeks after SRP was completed to assess plaque control. One month after completion of SRP, CPSS was recorded after comprehensive periodontal examination and blood was drawn for a follow-up assessment of hs-CRP levels.

2.5 | Blood collection and analysis of hs-CRP levels

Serum samples were collected from a single, clean venipuncture with minimal stasis through the skin and in the antecubital fossa at baseline and 2 and 6 months after completion of treatment. Three milliliters of blood was drawn using a 5cc disposable syringe and 23-gauge needles. The blood was allowed to clot and then centrifuged at 3000 RPM for 10 min. The serum was then separated and tested for CRP levels using the commercially available kits. hs-CRP levels were assessed from the serum separated from the acquired blood samples from baseline and 1-month post-SRP by commercially available immunoturbidimetric assay. The reagent CRP-Turbilatex agglutination assay is a quantitative turbidimetric assay for measurement of CRP in human serum. Latex particles coated with specific human anti-CRP are agglutinated when mixed with sample containing CRP. The agglutination causes an absorbance change that allows quantification of CRP levels within the samples through use of a calibrator of known CRP concentration.

2.6 | Statistical analysis

Data analyses were performed using statistical software[#]. Kolmogorov–Smirnov and the Shapiro-Wilk tests were applied to determine the data distribution of CPSS and hs-CRP. Non-parametric tests were used since the variables did not follow a normal distribution. Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used for data analysis. The correlations between CPSS and hs-CRP at baseline and post-SRP were performed using the Spearman rank correlation analysis.

3 | RESULTS

All 30 patients (age range, 16 to 56 years), successfully completed the study. Table 1 lists CPSS and hs-CRP data for each patient at baseline and post-SRP time points. The data were tested for normality using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and the Shapiro-Wilk test (see Tables S1 and S2 in online *Journal of Periodontology*). Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used for data analysis due to non-parametric data obtained. The baseline CPSS ranged from 38 to 162 whereas the post-SRP CPSS ranged from nine to 121 (Figure 1). In addition, the baseline hs-CRP values ranged from 0.37 to 5.69 mg/L whereas the post-SRP hs-CRP values ranged from 0.14 to 3.49 mg/L (Figure 2). There was a statistically significant reduction in post-SRP CPSS values from the baseline values ($z = 4.783$, $p < 0.0001$). Similarly, there was a statistically significant reduction in the post-SRP hs-CRP levels from the baseline levels ($z = 4.782$, $p < 0.0001$) (see Tables S3 and S4 in online *Journal of Periodontology*).

A positive association was found between the baseline levels of CPSS and hs-CRP ($\rho = 0.57$) and the post-SRP

[#] SAS software (version 9.4; SAS Institute, Cary, NC, USA).

TABLE 1 Patient demographics with pre and post CPSS and hs-CRP levels

Patient No.	Age, years	Sex	Pre-treatment CPSS	Post-treatment CPSS	Pre-treatment hs-CRP (mg/L)	Post-treatment hs-CRP (mg/L)
1	42	M	88	42	1.47	0.84
2	20	F	38	10	1.06	0.54
3	47	M	102	60	0.76	0.49
4	16	F	51	14	0.49	0.19
5	25	M	38	21	1.25	0.84
6	29	F	117	59	0.98	0.42
7	54	M	128	107	4.04	2.34
8	40	F	111	70	1.46	0.5
9	41	F	46	17	1.32	0.64
10	38	F	141	94	4.78	2.69
11	38	F	98	62	1.21	1
12	32	M	135	101	3.46	2.1
13	24	M	49	9	1.05	0.15
14	42	M	105	89	3.02	2.19
15	48	M	131	74	4.17	1.54
16	45	F	57	25	1.85	0.86
17	35	M	147	113	4.8	1.46
18	23	F	67	12	0.58	0.16
19	28	F	119	80	4.63	3.49
20	51	F	51	25	1.14	0.95
21	26	F	55	15	0.72	0.18
22	25	M	74	10	0.34	0.14
23	56	F	162	121	5.69	2.76
24	28	F	112	54	0.7	0.17
25	24	F	121	68	1.9	0.3
26	17	F	54	12	0.37	0.3
27	26	M	101	74	1.44	1.15
28	31	F	132	63	0.62	0.41
29	31	F	72	18	1.53	0.76
30	35	F	65	12	1.52	0.86

Abbreviations: CPSS, Clinical Periodontal Sum Score; F, female; hs-CRP, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein; M, male.

values of CPSS and hs-CRP ($\rho = 0.75$) by using Spearman correlation. There was moderate agreement between the baseline levels of CPSS and hs-CRP ($\rho = 0.57$) and substantial agreement ($\rho = 0.75$) in the correlation between the post-SRP values of CPSS and hs-CRP by using Spearman correlation (Table 2). Furthermore, in the present study, eight out of 30 patients (26.6%) had clinically elevated CRP (≥ 3 mg/L) before intervention. One-month post-SRP, only one patient showed elevated CRP (≥ 3 mg/L) which accounts to 3.3% of the subjects. Consequently, 87.5% of the individuals who demonstrated elevated CRP at baseline showed normal (<3 mg/L) CRP levels after SRP. These changes in elevated CRP were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) (Table 3).

4 | DISCUSSION

The present study showed that SRP can effectively reduce the levels of CRP and that the severity of periodontal inflammation as indicated by the CPSS score was correlated with a proportional elevation in serum CRP levels.

The serum levels of CRP can increase by other conditions other than periodontitis. The exclusion criteria for this study specifically included systemic diseases and inflammatory conditions that may affect CRP levels to rule out any potential influence. Furthermore, patients with a past history of recent periodontal therapy were also excluded because previous therapy may have resulted in
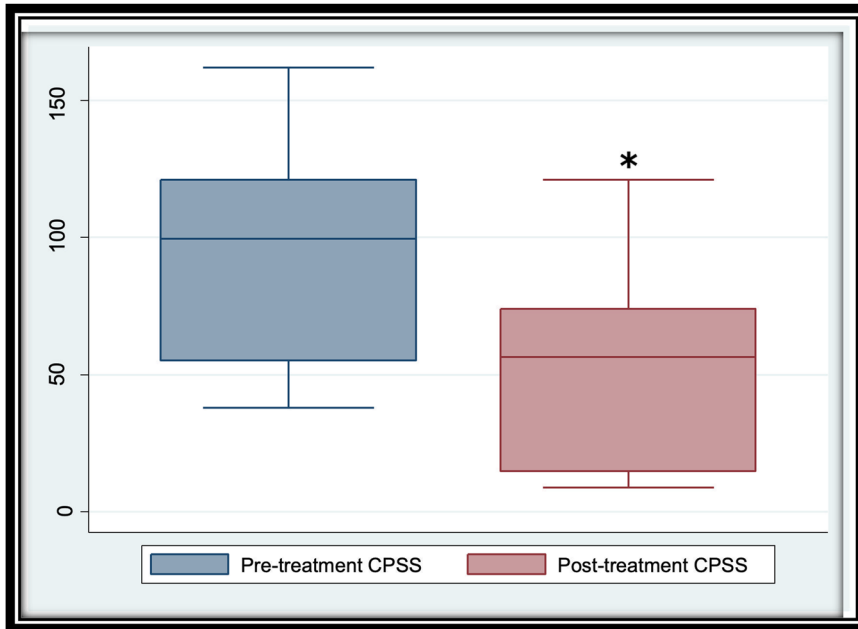
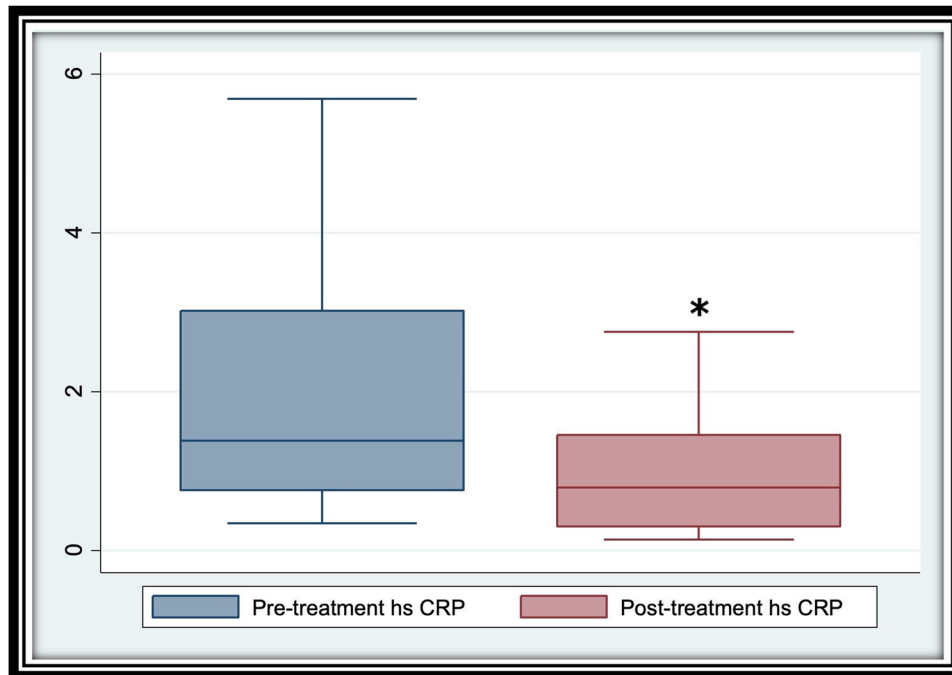**FIGURE 1** Mean and confidence interval of pre-treatment and post-treatment CPSS

FIGURE 2 Mean and confidence interval of pre-treatment and post-treatment hs-CRP mg/l

TABLE 2 Correlation between the post-SRP values of CPSS and hs-CRP using Spearman correlation

	Baseline CPSS	Post-SRP CPSS	Baseline hs-CRP	Post-SRP hs-CRP
Baseline CPSS	1.0000			
Post-SRP CPSS	0.8616	1.0000		
Baseline hs-CRP	0.5703	0.7432	1.0000	
Post-SRP hs-CRP	0.4814	0.7507	0.8561	1.0000
0.41–0.60		Moderate agreement		
0.61–0.90		Substantial agreement		
0.91–1.00		Almost perfect agreement		

Abbreviations: CPSS, Clinical Periodontal Sum Score; hs-CRP, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein; SRP, scaling and root planing.

TABLE 3 Occurrence of hs-CRP at baseline versus post-treatment

Hs-CRP at baseline and post-SRP				
	Hs-CRP ≥3	Hs-CRP ‹3	Total	Occurrence of increased hs-CRP
Baseline	8	22	30	26.6%
Post-SRP	1	29	30	3.3%

Reduction in occurrence of elevated hs-CRP is 87.5%.

Abbreviations: hs-CRP, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein; SRP, scaling and root planing.

a reduction of systemic inflammatory burden and thus diminishing of the impact of SRP on CRP levels.[21] In addition, periodontal therapy may cause tissue injury that would again lead to an inflammatory response and lead to increase of CRP levels immediately post-treatment.[22] Hence, in this study, the outcomes were assessed 1 month post-SRP.

The mean baseline value of hs-CRP found for subjects in this study was slightly less than previously reported,[13] which may have attributed to more severe forms of periodontal destruction in the previous study. Moreover, statistically significant reduction in the post-SRP hs-CRP levels relative to the baseline levels is found to be comparable with the results of the systematic review and meta-analysis of CRP in relation to periodontitis and several other studies.[13,23–25] This study also revealed a statistically significant reduction in the post-SRP CPSS values relative to the baseline values, indicating an improvement in the clinical parameters after SRP. CPSS includes clinical parameters of BOP, PD, suppuration, and FI. These findings are consistent with the review of several studies reporting improvement in the clinical parameters after SRP.[26] Additionally, our results showed a positive association and moderate agreement between the baseline levels of CPSS and hs-CRP and the post-SRP values of CPSS and hs-CRP. Similar findings were also reported in a systematic review and meta-analysis that studied the relationship between CRP and periodontitis.[13]

In the present study, eight out of 30 patients (26.6%) had elevated CRP (≥3 mg/L) at baseline whereas post-SRP, only one patient (3.3%) showed elevated CRP (≥3 mg/L). So, the reduction in occurrence of higher CRP after intervention is 87.5%, which is statistically significant and clinically applicable. It should be noted that the sole patient who had higher CRP value post-SRP had hs-CRP value of 4.63 at baseline, which was reduced to 3.49, accounting to 24.6% reduction in that individual's hs-CRP value.

The results of the present study highlight three points. First, elevated CRP levels were associated with an increasing severity of periodontal inflammation as measured by the CPSS. Second, SRP resulted in improvement of the periodontal parameters irrespective of the state of the disease. Third, SRP led to a reduction of systemic inflam-

mation as evidenced by the reduction in CRP. Some studies have failed to confirm the decrease in CRP with periodontal treatment,[23,27] however it is important to highlight that these studies did not account for the CRP influencing conditions such as obesity, hypertension, and cholesterol. Additionally, previous studies demonstrated residual diseased periodontal sites remained after the periodontal treatment, which may have had some bearing on the results. However, one of the limitations of the present study is that the presented results can only suggest that the severity of periodontal inflammation (CPSS) was correlated elevation in serum CRP levels, but this does not necessarily apply to the severity of periodontitis.

One of the factors that could have influenced the results of this study was the age of the participants (age range, 16 to 56 years). Given the vagaries of the pathogenesis of periodontal disease in terms of age, rate of progression, and the episodic nature of the disease, it would be very difficult to gather all the samples of same age having similar periodontal status. Also, the patients enrolled in this study have periodontal status ranging from gingivitis to severe periodontitis, which may have allowed for significant heterogeneity and may have obscured more significant reactions seen with treatment of various forms of periodontal diseases. Moreover, strong correlation between the severity of periodontitis and the reduction of hs-CRP accordingly couldn't be established. Another limitation of this study might be that it adopted CPSS instead of the 2017 WWC.[1] Currently, the 2017 WWC does not include parameters that indicate inflammation (either bleeding or suppuration). For instance, a treated Stage III, with advanced bone loss and clinical attachment level ≥5 mm would remain a Stage III after treatment, resolution of PD and BOP, which would be considered a treated stable patient with periodontitis.[28,29] Grade is based, mainly, on comorbidities like diabetes mellitus and smoking that were excluded in this study for obvious reasons. Instead of giving a reference for proportions of diseased periodontal areas in the sites examined, the CPSS sums up the number of various recordings that are indicating periodontal inflammation.[18] This may have concealed findings and/or limited the ability to determine correlation. For example, given that it would not be anticipated that FI would change

after SRP, this composite periodontal disease assessment may have underestimated the clinical response to therapy.

An additional limitation to the widespread generalizability of the present study was related to its exclusion of subjects with systemic factors known to have an up-regulatory effect on CRP level. In the general population, for subjects with pre-existing known risk factors for cardiovascular disease, presence of periodontitis may add to the cumulative effect of such factors thus further increasing the risk. This aspect should be examined further in future studies.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

Within the limitations of this study, periodontitis is associated with elevation in serum CRP levels and that SRP is able to bring down the levels of CRP. The long-term impact of such a CRP reduction in reducing cardiovascular risk, its morbidity, and mortality can only be assessed by well-controlled longitudinal trials.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Bansari Shah and Monali Shah contributed to the conception and design of the work; Bansari Shah, Monali Shah, and Mohamed Meghil collected and analyzed the data;Bansari Shah, Mohamed Meghil, Maria Geisinger, and Muhammad H. A. Saleh contributed to manuscript preparation; Hom-Lay Wang and Maria Geisinger made critical changes and gave final approval to the manuscript. All authors gave their final approval and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors do not have any financial interests, either directly or indirectly, in the products or information listed in the paper.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.