Reply to Letter to the Editor

Cutting cartilage—surgical perspective

In reply to the letter to the editor, the authors would like to thank Dr Huntley for his comments. This study was intended as an illustration of the variation in cell viability and metabolism at the wound margin after wounding with two different, yet surgically relevant instruments. The point Dr Huntley makes about the bevel on both the trephine and the #23 scalpel blade is pertinent as it is likely that compressive forces at the wound margin are responsible for much of the cell death observed. The authors agree with Dr Huntley that parameters other than sharpness may well be involved in maintaining cell viability at the wound edge.

The authors would like to emphasise the need for further study into the effect of surgical instruments used during cartilage repair procedures on wound site viability, with a view to minimising cell death at the wound edge. Not only should surgical instruments for procedures involving debride ment be optimised to minimise cell death, viability at the wound site should also be considered during other procedures such as Mosaicplasty. During osteochondral harvest, whilst the viability of the chondrocytes at the edges of the osteochondral plug is of paramount importance, donor site morbidity should also be borne in mind, as cell death at the wound site may lead to degeneration of the tissue from the ‘non-load bearing’ region where the plugs were harvested.

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