

ESWT affects Schwann cell phenotype *in vitro* and *in vivo* thereby accelerating nerve regeneration

David Hercher^{*1,2}, Christina M.A.P Schuh^{*1,2}, Michaela Stainer^{1,2}, Rudolf Hopf^{1,2}, James Ferguson^{1,2}, Dominik Rünzler^{2,3}, Heinz Redl^{1,2}, Antal Nógrádi^{1,2,4}, Thomas Hausner^{1,2,5}

¹Ludwig Boltzmann Institut for Experimental and Clinical Traumatology, Vienna

²Austrian Cluster for Tissue Regeneration

³University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien-Department of Biochemical Engineering, Vienna

⁴University of Széged, Department of Anatomy, Histology and Embryology, Hungary

⁵UKH Lorenz Böhler, Vienna

*These Authors contributed equally

Introduction: Peripheral nerve injuries are common and a frequent cause of hospitalization displaying a major burden to patients and social health-care systems. ESWT has been shown to be one of very few treatment options which accelerates peripheral nerve regeneration. Despite recent advances in understanding the underlying mechanisms of ESWT, little is known of the effect on Schwann cells (SCs) and peripheral nerve regeneration. In this study we investigated these two aspects.

Methods

in vitro: Schwann cells have been isolated from motor, sensory and mixed nerves, respectively. Dissected nerves have been treated with ESWT prior to isolation. Cultured SCs were evaluated using FACS analysis and western blot.

in vivo: A femoral nerve defect model was established in the rat. The effects of ESWT on motor fibers regenerating through a sensory environment have been evaluated using automated gait analysis, electrophysiology, histology and qPCR.

Results: *In vitro* data indicate a strong influence of ESWT on the activation status of SCs of different phenotype. Motor SCs differ from sensory SCs regarding proliferation and expression of myelination associated proteins. ESWT is able to induce proliferation of motor and sensory SCs.

In vivo data indicate inferior regeneration of motor axons through a sensory nerve graft compared to a phenotypically matched graft. ESWT can ameliorate this effect and accelerate nerve regeneration.

Discussion: This study indicates that ESWT is able to accelerate peripheral nerve regeneration in a model which reflects the clinical reality after autologous nerve transplantation. Thereby providing support for the use of ESWT after peripheral nerve injury.

Device and producing company: Dermagold 100, MTS;

Setup: *in vitro:* waterbath, whole nerve

in vivo: 1x transcutaneously after wound closure