



Multiple studies show that combination therapy is more effective than single agents used alone. Different therapies acting at different stages of pigmentation can produce better clinical results than a single therapy acting at a single stage.

The most used combination therapy for melasma has been the Kligman formula, which combines hydroquinone 5%, tretinoin 0,1% and dexametasone 0,1%. More recently a new combination of hydroquinone 4%, tretinoin 0,05% and fluocinolone 0,01% has been commercialised proving better than any other combination, with 77% of patients showing complete or almost complete clearing.

Tip 4. Use chemical peels with care

Superficial chemical peels are an at-

tractive option because of their few side effects and minimal recovery time. The burning sensation associated with superficial chemical peels is mild, not requiring the use of topical or local anesthetic. Nevertheless, these therapies require extensive experience in its use to prevent the development of irritant dermatitis. In patients with ethnic skin, irritant dermatitis can lead to postinflammatory hypopigmentation or hyperpigmentation.

A clinical trial showed the safety and efficacy of glycolic acid peels on postinflammatory hyperpigmentation in dark skin individuals. The treatment consists in the application of a 2% hydroquinone/10% glycolic acid gel plus the application of six serial glycolic acid peels (68% maximum concentration). This study demonstrated a more rapid and

greater improvement with minimal adverse effects.

Tip 5. Use laser only in non-responding cases

The challenge of the use of lasers in patients with dark skin is to achieve effective treatment with minimal complications. We have to be conservative, with low energy settings, appropriate wavelengths and cautious with the use of cooling techniques. The use of lasers should be restricted to cases unresponsive to topical therapy or chemical peels and an appropriate maintenance therapy should be selected to avoid relapse when treating melasma.

If we decide to proceed with the use of laser devices one of the best option is a Q Switch Nd: Yag laser. It is critical to use at least a SPF 30 sun-

screen before and after the laser treatment and it is also advisable the use of hydroquinone and tretinoin during the treatment.

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