

# Topical Vinpocetine as a Potential Adjuvant Therapy for Chronic Anal Fissure: A Drug Repurposing Hypothesis

## Dear Editor

Chronic anal fissure remains a distressing anorectal disorder that significantly reduces patients' quality of life. Conventional topical therapies, including nitrates, calcium channel blockers, and botulinum toxin, primarily target internal sphincter relaxation and local perfusion. However, relapse rates remain high, and complete healing is often delayed or incomplete.<sup>1</sup> Glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) is frequently associated with dose-limiting headaches, whereas calcium channel blockers such as diltiazem and nifedipine, despite better tolerability, do not directly address chronic inflammation or impaired wound repair, which are key contributors to fissure persistence.<sup>1,2</sup> Botulinum toxin injection is generally reserved for refractory cases. Its clinical utility is constrained by the need for injection, variability in dosing, cost, and the risk of transient fecal incontinence.<sup>1,3</sup> These limitations highlighted the need for alternative or adjunctive topical therapies with broader mechanistic coverage.

Given the multifactorial pathophysiology of chronic fissure, involving ischemia, oxidative stress, and local inflammation, agents with vasodilatory, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory actions may offer additional benefit.<sup>1,2</sup> Vinpocetine, a semisynthetic derivative of vincamine and a selective phosphodiesterase-1 (PDE1) inhibitor currently used to increase blood flow in cerebrovascular disorders, exhibits precisely these multiple properties. It enhances cyclic nucleotide-mediated smooth muscle relaxation, improves microvascular blood flow, attenuates inflammatory signaling through inhibition of nuclear factor-kappa B (NF- $\kappa$ B) and downregulation of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) and pro-inflammatory cytokines, and promotes wound healing. Unlike conventional topical therapies, vinpocetine might simultaneously target vascular dysfunction, inflammation, and oxidative injury, key drivers of fissure chronicity.<sup>4-7</sup> Experimental studies further demonstrated that vinpocetine accelerated epithelialization, enhanced collagen deposition, and promoted angiogenesis.<sup>5</sup> Beyond its neurovascular indications, topical vinpocetine formulations indicated promising outcomes in experimental models of chronic inflammatory dermatoses such as psoriasis and atopic dermatitis, with excellent tolerability and negligible systemic absorption.<sup>8,9</sup> Additionally noteworthy in this regard is a recent study that confirmed the safety of a mucoadhesive *in situ* gel formulation for intranasal delivery of vinpocetine.<sup>10</sup> Although direct data on rectal mucosal application are lacking, these findings support the formulation's potential safety and pharmacologic plausibility for mucocutaneous use.

Although no clinical studies have yet evaluated vinpocetine in anal fissure, its mechanisms align well with the key pathophysiologic drivers of fissure persistence, namely, sphincter hypertonia, reduced mucosal perfusion, and local inflammation. Repurposing vinpocetine as an adjuvant topical agent could therefore represent a rational, low-risk strategy deserving of pilot clinical evaluation. It is suggested that future studies examine topical vinpocetine's efficacy, optimal concentration, and safety in chronic anal fissure, especially in patients unresponsive to standard medical therapies. By integrating vasodilatory, anti-inflammatory, and pro-healing effects, vinpocetine might help bridge the therapeutic gap between conservative and surgical management.

## Authors' Contribution

Z.N.T: Conception, writing, and reviewing. The author has read and approved the final manuscript and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work, in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

## AI Declaration

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or generative AI technologies were used in the preparation, writing, analysis, or editing of this manuscript.

**Conflict of Interest:** None declared.

**Keywords** • Vinpocetine • Anal canal • Vasodilation • Wound healing • Inflammation

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Received: 15 November 2025

Accepted: 14 March 2026

Accepted: 28 March 2026

Please cite this article as: Nazari Taloki Z. Topical Vinpocetine as a Potential Adjuvant Therapy for Chronic Anal Fissure: A Drug Repurposing Hypothesis. *Iran J Med Sci.* 2026;51(10):747-749. doi: 10.30476/ijms.2026.109670.4502.

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