Topical treatments for squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)

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The following topical treatments are often considered for superficial SCCs, especially when surgery or other interventions are not feasible options. However, the choice of treatment depends on various factors such as the size, location, and depth of the tumor, as well as the patient's overall health and preferences.

1. **Imiquimod**: Imiquimod is a topical cream that stimulates the immune system to attack cancer cells. It is applied directly to the affected skin and has been shown to be effective in treating SCC in situ and superficial SCCs. It activates the body's immune response against cancer cells [1].
2. **5-Fluorouracil (5-FU)**: 5-FU is a cream applied directly to the skin, which interferes with cancer cell DNA synthesis, leading to cell death. It is commonly used for superficial SCCs and actinic keratoses. Studies have shown its efficacy in treating SCCs, particularly in situ and superficial lesions [2].
3. **Diclofenac**: Diclofenac is a gel that contains an anti-inflammatory medication. Applied directly to the skin, it has been used in the treatment of SCC in situ and superficial SCCs. Diclofenac reduces inflammation and may also induce cancer cell death [3].
4. **Ingenol mebutate**: Derived from a plant extract, this gel targets certain types of SCCs by directly killing cancer cells when applied to the skin [4]. It is applied once daily for 2-3 consecutive days.
5. **Photodynamic therapy (PDT)**: This treatment involves applying a special liquid to the skin followed by exposure to a special light. It aids in destroying cancer cells. PDT can be beneficial for specific types of SCCs, particularly those on the face and scalp [5].

References:

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