

## From the Lords to the wards



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Wound care is a topic close to all of our hearts and so it was with great interest that I followed the debate in the UK House of Lords in November tabled by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath regarding what plans the UK government has to develop a strategy for improving the standards of wound care in the NHS. Baroness Wheeler stood in for the absent Lord Hunt in the Lords, beginning by urging the government to “recognise the need for urgent action and for the development of a strategy across care providers for improving the standards of wound care” (House of Lords Hansard, 2017).

It was this ambition to provide a platform from which a national strategy can be created that I believe will resonate across the world as from London to Lahore to Lisbon, lifestyle trends are underpinning increasing demand for wound care services. Indeed, taking the NHS in isolation, a staggering 2.2 million patients were managed with a wound during 2012/2013 at an annual cost of £5.3bn (Guest et al, 2016).

Baroness Wheeler explained that, in her opinion, a nationally agreed strategy should be established to “reduce variation, prevent wounds getting worse and improve outcomes” (House of Lords Hansard, 2017). She acknowledged the work undertaken in Bradford in the UK during the short debate (Guest et al, 2016), where a team of wound care specialists examined the economic burden imposed by wounds. The study highlighted a lack of evidence-based care in the UK, with almost a third of all patients failing to receive an accurate wound diagnosis. The lack of involvement of specialist nurses was a common theme; a theme that I’m sure clinicians around the globe are familiar with.

Lord MacKenzie of Culkein followed up by calling on the UK government to increase the amount of tissue viability nurses (TVNs), highlighting their key role in preventing wounds in terms of “education; in research; in working with other National Health Service teams, including pharmacists, and, ideally, outside the hospital with, for example, community staff, care homes and hospices” (House of Lords Hansard, 2017). He bemoaned the shortage of TVNs in the NHS as patients lose out on their “capacity to reduce trauma for patients and mitigate the huge costs to

the health service” (House of Lords Hansard, 2017).

The fastidious application of best practice and guidelines in a national strategy should also be considered, according to Lord Kakkar. With this in mind, and conscious that every country in the world struggles with a growing burden from wounds, encouraging consensus and establishing protocols that can be rolled out nationally and internationally are surely integral to improving the quality of life of afflicted patients and their families, as well as reducing the vast costs associated with wound care.

This is, of course, not a new concept, with the World Union of Wound Healing Societies (WUWHS) having ‘One Vision, One Mission’ as its dictum at the 2016 conference in Florence, which I was honoured to attend. The conference brought together international speakers who were in agreement that greater coalescence of national societies should be a core aim. Looking ahead to the 2020 WUWHS conference in Abu Dhabi, the central theme will be ‘Global healing. Changing lives’ and, in a similar vein to previous incarnations of the conference, increased collaboration between wound care societies across the globe is the focus.

Strategy is, therefore, key. There is no denying the severity of the problem facing clinicians, but an increased awareness of the impact of wounds, not only on patients, but on healthcare services, allied with improved systems of care is surely an admirable goal and a debate in the House of Lords is as good a place as any to kickstart a renewed commitment to this, not just in the UK, but across the globe.

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Guest JF, Ayoub N, McIlwraith T et al (2016) Health economic burden that different wound types impose on the UK’s National Health Service. *Int Wound J* 14(2): 322–30

House of Lords Hansard (2017) NHS: Wound Care: Question for Short Debate. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2jRQZws> (accessed 23.02.2018)

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