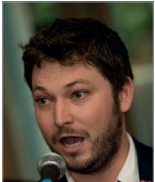


Time to get our priorities straight



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Chronic wounds are high on the healthcare agendas across the globe, but should they be even higher? The NHS in the UK spends a total of £5bn per year treating chronic wounds (Campbell, 2019) and there are an estimated 2.2mn people currently living with non-healing wounds in the UK (Guest et al, 2015). Untreated chronic wounds are a leading cause of limb amputation (Umali, 2019). A confluence of an ageing population, a growing obesity problem and rising number of people with diabetes (these individuals are at a greater risk of developing a chronic wound) has given rise to a growing number of chronic wounds in the UK. Older age, diabetes and obesity can prevent wound healing, as well as smoking, infection and poor diet.

Between 70,000 and 90,000 people with diabetes in England have a foot ulcer at any one time and diabetes results in more than 9,000 leg, toe or foot amputations per annum (Campbell, 2019), underlining the extent of the problem. Professor Keith Harding, a member of the editorial board of *Wounds International*, pointed out to *The Guardian* that “wounds have consequences”. Wise words and something that perhaps gets lost in the busy day to day of a healthcare setting.

Harding explained: “The public thinks of wounds as trivial, minor traumas, like cutting your finger on a piece of paper, sunburn or grazes on knees. In reality, there’s a big diversity of underlying diseases that can cause them. The main obvious effects are pain, suffering and disfigurement, but they have huge effects on individuals.” As Harding argues: “Wounds generally are neglected by everybody: the medical community, NHS, governments, hospital managers and even society, which mistakenly seems to think they’re part of the ageing process” (Campbell, 2019).

The UK is not alone. Chronic wounds currently affect almost half a million Australians per year, costing the healthcare system around AU\$3bn every year (Umali, 2019). Meanwhile, the American Professional Wound Care Association (2017) states that chronic non-healing wounds impact nearly 15% of Medicare beneficiaries in the US (8.2mn people). A conservative estimate of the associated costs of such wounds per year stands at US\$28bn.

So it is obvious that the time to act to combat the scourge of chronic wounds, but what strides

are being taken on the global stage? Researchers at the RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, have joined forces with a not-for-profit health and aged-care provider on a clinical trial of imaging technology to improve chronic wound care. Thermal imaging techniques are being evaluated to determine whether or not they can predict when leg wounds caused by poor venous function will not heal as quickly as they should.

A potential game changer in terms of research took place in 2018 (Edmonds et al, 2018) when Laboratoires Urgo Medical conducted the Explorer study in 43 hospitals with specialised diabetic foot clinics in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and the UK. The randomised, double-blind study compared the efficacy and tolerance of the UrgoStart® dressing to a neutral dressing on neuro-ischaemic diabetic foot ulcers. It was the first clinical study to demonstrate the efficacy of a dressing in the treatment of chronic diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) with 60% more patients seeing their DFUs healed compared to a well-managed standard treatment, with reduced healing time of 60 days compared to the average healing time of 180 days using standard protocol. DFUs are a major complication of diabetes, with between 19% and 34% of all people with diabetes developing a foot ulcer at some point in their lives (Armstrong et al, 2017). To put into context, by 2040 some 640mn people across the globe will suffer from diabetes (International Diabetes Federation [IDF], 2015). These are some examples of the current research and consensus that are vital if we are to meet the challenges of chronic wounds in the future. An increased focus on high-quality research by wound care companies and clinicians can only be a good thing, as will a growing onus on a multidisciplinary team approach to treating and managing wounds. Collaboration is key to get everyone on the same page and we at *Wounds International* are proud to offer a platform to showcase research on a global stage that will hopefully continue to inform and transform practice.

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