

A case study to highlight the ever-changing needs of a chronic wound

Karen Beston - Practice Nurse, Alvechurch Medical Centre, Alvechurch, Worcestershire.

Background of clinical issue

This case study relates to Mrs X, a 68 year old lady, first referred to the Practice Nurse following a fall (Picture 1). The case study emphasises the need for a thorough holistic assessment and the need to identify and manage the different stages of wound healing.

Mrs X had a medical history which included hypertension and osteoarthritis, also suffering a myocardial infarction 11 years ago. Two days following the fall the bruising became darker in colour, the pain increased and she had developed a haematoma.

Management approach

The haematoma was managed with a non-adherent dressing secured by a retention bandage, but this was uncomfortable and slipped down the leg. The haematoma continued to increase in size and became much darker in colour. Following a holistic assessment, which included blood investigations, it was decided the priority of wound management was debridement (Picture 2). A sheet hydrogel* was used to facilitate debridement and reduce pain and was covered with a secondary bordered foam dressing (Picture 3). This combination of dressings enabled Mrs X to continue with day to day activities as before her injury.

Outcomes

This regime was continued twice weekly and the wound initially responded well. At the end of the fifth week the healing process slowed down and the wound and surrounding skin became red and hot, the classic signs of a local wound infection. It was decided that a topical antimicrobial would be required to help reduce the signs of local wound infection (Picture 4). A HydroBalance wound dressing containing polyhexamethylene biguanide (PHMB)** was used for two weeks which also helped eliminate wound pain.

The wound steadily progressed (Picture 5) with complete healing five months later (Picture 6). An alternative hosiery kit*** was used to continue the compression therapy without the bulk of bandages.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates the complex, ever-changing needs of a wound during its healing process. High levels of skill and the knowledge of the practice nurse are essential for prompt and effective care. Knowledge of alternative methods of compression therapy is essential to adapt to the needs of active, mobile patients to improve their quality of life during wound management.

* ActiFormCool® – Activa Healthcare

** Suprasorb® X+PHMB – Activa Healthcare

*** Leg Ulcer Hosiery Kit – Activa Healthcare



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6