

Nurses must start publicising their success in wound care

David Gray

In recent decades there has been a trend in the mainstream media portraying the health service, and the professionals who work within it, in a negative light. The criticism tends to be linked to waiting lists, issues related to hygiene and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, understaffing and hospital closures. This trend is only ever bucked when something out of the ordinary happens, such as when a particularly heart-warming case comes to light or a novel treatment is introduced into the health service.

While stories such as these are very positive in the sense that lives will be saved or improved, they do nothing to demonstrate how wounds are clinically managed. The reality of wound management in the UK is rarely reported in such a way so as to provide the public with an insight into the great work that is carried out by nurses on a daily basis. However, we only have ourselves to blame for this as we have never shared the successful results that are attained in the UK.

Cases such as the healing of grade four pressure ulcers, dehisced surgical wounds and circumferential leg ulcers are amazing achievements that we often just take for granted. The public is not aware of this type of success unless they, or a very close family member,

have suffered from a debilitating wound. Highlighting just one of these cases from first presentation to full healing would impress the majority of the UK public. However, despite our television channels being filled with programmes containing graphic surgical procedures, the sight of a wound healing over a period of months is never shown.

Changes in therapy which eliminate dressing leakage enable patients and their families to re-engage with their life and cope with a long-term wound. For the patients concerned and their relatives these are life-changing achievements...

Other wound management accomplishments may be less obvious but no less positive, e.g. the successful management of a malodorous wound will have a positive effect on the patient's quality of life. Also, the prevention of a wound infection in a patient at very high risk of developing one will have a huge impact on that patient's life but this type of achievement is often under-valued.

Changes in therapy that eliminate dressing leakage enable patients and their families to re-engage with their life and cope with a long-term wound. For the patients concerned and their relatives these are life-changing achievements that can make an enormous difference to the quality of life of all concerned. Not all wounds will heal but the vast majority can be,

and are, successfully managed in the UK, which is great news for patients and their families.

Currently, wound management in the UK faces a number of challenges:

- ▶▶ The possibility of certain treatments being restricted as a result of government-sponsored initiatives
- ▶▶ The possibility of a reduction in the provision of industry-provided education
- ▶▶ Specialists being graded inappropriately as a result of *Agenda for Change*.

We have a choice with regard to how we deal with these challenges: we could feel sorry for ourselves or take positive steps to highlight the excellent work that occurs in the UK everyday.

Wounds UK is committed to providing a positive platform for the celebration of achievements in the field of UK wound management. We aim to do that this year via our awards (www.wounds-uk.com/awards) and National Wounds Day, 22 June 2006.

We want to promote the positive aspects of wounds in the UK, demonstrating the great work that is carried out in both primary and secondary care settings. National Wounds Day is about publicising these achievements and ensuring the public is alert to the high standard of care that they can expect to receive. This is a cause for celebration. **WUK**

David Gray is Editor, Wounds UK, and Clinical Nurse Specialist, Department of Tissue Viability, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen