

EWMA publication update

EWMA's educational remit

The European Wound Management Association (EWMA) was founded in 1991 to address clinical and scientific issues related to wound healing. In association with Medical Education Partnership (MEP) Ltd, it publishes position documents that provide advice on the clinical management of a specific topic. They draw together the current international literature and highlight questions for debate, research and practice. The aim is to share information and best practice throughout Europe with a view to stimulating international discussion and collaboration.

The documents provide both practical and theoretical material. They are aimed at a multidisciplinary audience with the intention of meeting the practical needs of the hands-on clinician, while updating the expert in the field. To help maximise dissemination and meet EWMA's objectives, the documents are available in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, and one has even been translated into Japanese.

Identifying Criteria for Wound Infection (2005)

This document stresses the need for greater understanding of the complex interactions that precede the development of overt wound infection and clearer definitions of terms such as critical colonisation. Infection is the end result of a complex interaction between the host, organism, wound environment and therapeutic interventions, which is further complicated by bacterial cooperation and virulence. Recognition of subtle changes in the inflammatory response is necessary if early signs of infection are to be identified.

Also presented is a recent study that used the Delphi process to identify clinical signs of infection in six different wound types. The study involved an international, multidisciplinary group of 54 wound care experts who generated criteria for infection in each wound type. A key consideration was the fact

that, despite some common criteria, each wound type might present with different clinical signs of infection. These are sometimes of a subtle nature and will only be detected by consistent and repeated observation. The document also offers a detailed critical evaluation of the criteria generated by the Delphi study in two wound types: pressure ulcers and acute surgical wounds.

In the absence of any other existing guidance, this work raises significant issues and provides a stimulus for the development of tools to help in the early identification of infection. Not all wounds will become infected and the level of suspicion will vary according to the host status, susceptibility to infection and the consequences of any infection. The challenge is to use the criteria generated by the Delphi expert panel as a platform for further work to provide clearer guidance for patients, carers, and clinicians.

Wound Bed Preparation in Practice (2004)

It is realistic to expect that, with evidence-based care, many wounds will heal uneventfully within a reasonable timeframe. However, a small but significant proportion of chronic wounds fail to heal even with the highest standard of care. The management of these wounds has come under scrutiny and attention has turned to the factors that influence their healing and to the preparation of the wound bed.

This document seeks to advance understanding of the concepts of wound bed preparation by examining how the four components of the TIME model (Tissue management, Inflammation and infection control, Moisture balance, Epithelial [edge] advancement) are translated into the practical management of different wound types.

Understanding Compression Therapy (2003)

The potential impact of compression therapy on ulcer healing has been highlighted in numerous studies during the last decade. Few health care interventions can claim such dramatic

effects on outcome. Patients report improvements in pain, mobility and general quality of life as a consequence of their ulcer healing. However, establishing pan-European standards for compression therapy has not yet been possible. EWMA aims to stimulate international debate on compression therapy, which will allow for its reclassification and facilitate consensus across Europe.

Pain at Wound Dressing Changes (2002)

This position document provides clear advice on the assessment and management of pain at dressing changes in chronic wounds. It arose from a growing acknowledgement that pain is a frequent symptom in patients with a wide range of wounds. Research in the last 10 years has tended to focus on healing and little attention has been paid to patient-centred outcomes such as pain. This is a complex poorly understood problem that is lacking in an evidence base to make recommendations.

New series

In 2006, EWMA launched a new educational series to examine areas where the literature is insufficient to create a full position statement and to facilitate best practice across Europe. The first of these is **Lymphoedema Bandaging in Practice** which has received endorsement from a number of national lymphoedema organisations.

These EWMA documents are viewed as essential, referenced documents. Support from companies in the form of educational grants has given EWMA the opportunity to develop these important initiatives. EWMA is currently identifying poorly understood areas of practice where there is need for clinical guidance and clear recommendations for practice. This will help bring real benefits to patients and carers. To download PDF copies please visit www.ewma.org.

Christine Moffatt CBE, EWMA Council Member, Professor of Nursing and Co-director, Centre for Research and Implementation of Clinical Practice, Thames Valley University