

National Wounds Day is a time to celebrate progress

Keith Harding

The clinical, professional and political importance of wounds has been increasingly recognised over the past 50 years. Another milestone in this process is the UK's first National Wounds Day on 22nd June 2006. This is a major development, not only for the organisers of events to celebrate the day, but it also indicates how much more interest there is for the subject.

The changing demographic make-up of our society has led to increasing numbers of patients either with, or who are at risk of developing, wounds that have the potential to be difficult to heal. This, coupled with the recent increased interest in the modulation of the scarring process that may lead to improved cosmetic and functional results for patients who have surgical interventions, will lead to new clinical systems and structures being developed.

The research literature indicates that, despite advances in surgical techniques and improved antibiotic prophylactic regimen, there are still approximately 10% of patients who develop a surgical site infection following clean surgery such as hernia, breast, and vein operations. Professionals working in wound care still face many challenges, but at this stage we should recognise the successes that have been achieved. The rapid increase in the number of tissue viability nurses,

clinical nurse specialists in wound healing and nurse consultants in this area clearly shows how much has changed.

Nurse-led leg ulcer and wound clinics have also shown the way forward for achieving improvements in patient care. However, the roles of podiatrists, doctors and other healthcare professionals are less well developed. The management of diabetic foot disease is clearly an area where podiatry should be the lead clinical profession. The role and engagement of doctors should not be underestimated or ignored. The recent ABC series on wound healing published in the *British Medical Journal* aimed at generalists and medical students should stimulate an increased awareness of the current practices in wound healing.

Politically there has been an increased awareness of how much money and resources are being spent on patients with wounds, but it is still an area that fails to be considered as important as areas of care such as cancer, heart disease, and AIDS. The increasing use of pressure ulcer prevalence or incidence as an indicator of the quality of healthcare provision is ensuring that more attention is given to this subject, but this may mean there is a risk of it becoming a target to be met by taking minimal action to avoid criticism, rather than a subject for true professional engagement.

The UK's first National Wounds Day will provide an opportunity for professionals to drive forward

advances in wound care. In addition to a press conference in London aimed at informing the national media about wound care, there will be a large number of local events to ensure regional awareness of local successes and innovations. There is also the 11th Annual Oxford-European Wound Healing Summer School taking place and an international meeting on negative pressure therapy in Brighton.

Wounds UK will also be marking National Wounds Day on 22nd June with its annual Summer Conference. The Wounds UK Paediatric and Dermatology Conferences will also be held on the same day at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire.

In the week before National Wounds Day, the Wound Healing Research Unit in Cardiff will celebrate its 15th birthday with a meeting for politicians, university staff and NHS managers to demonstrate how much can be achieved if a multidisciplinary, academic, but clinically-focused group is set up. Could you imagine such a wide range of events occurring at the same time – even five years ago? I certainly couldn't! All of us who are involved in changing practice and improving the image of wound healing should celebrate what we have achieved. There is a lot more work to be done, but allow yourself some time on 22nd June for some self-congratulation and share in what will prove to be a key date in the development of this important subject. www.woundsuk.com

Keith Harding is International Editorial Advisor, and Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine, Wound Healing Research Unit, Cardiff