

Improved quality of life through odour reducing compression bandaging

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Introduction

Living with a chronic venous leg ulcer can be both socially and psychologically distressing, yet the impact is often underestimated. Healthcare Professionals often focus on 'healing' the ulcer, rather than the affect symptoms such as malodour can have on a person's 'quality of life and wellbeing'⁽¹⁾.

The ability for the patient to smell their ulcer can influence how they undertake everyday activities and interact with others, as they often fear that other people can smell the wound. Patients may become more withdrawn and restrict social activities, additionally the fear that others can smell the wound can cause distress, embarrassment, low self-esteem, and have a negative impact on healing⁽¹⁾.

Case Study

Mrs A is an 88 year old female, who presented to the Community Nursing team following the development of an ulcer to her left leg. Mrs A had previously been treated by the Community Nursing team for lower limb oedema which was managed with compression hosiery.

On initial assessment there were clinical signs of infection, the leg was red, swollen and painful and the wound was very malodorous. Antimicrobial dressings were commenced to reduce the infection and a charcoal dressing was applied to assist with the odour. Doppler results indicated the leg ulcer to be venous in origin as the ABPI was 0.83, and an inelastic (short stretch) bandaging regime was commenced. Mrs A was seen twice weekly by the local Leg Club and Community Nursing team.

On every visit Mrs A would complain about the malodour from her bandages, although the nurses never noticed it. The initial wound infection appeared to have resolved, despite this the nurses continued to apply both the antimicrobial and charcoal dressings to help with the malodour expressed. Mrs A often commented that she has always had a 'sensitive sense of smell' and that the smell of the wound was causing her distress.

Over time she began to withdraw from social activities, and no longer attended the residential lounge in the sheltered accommodation building where she lived, and stopped going out altogether. The impact of the malodour and pain from the ulcer had really affected her self-confidence and mood. Gradually the wound began to deteriorate and Mrs A was losing confidence in whether or not her ulcer would ever heal, and most importantly to her, if the odour could be controlled.

Following four months of treatment the nurses at the Leg Club suggested to Mrs A to try the new HERO H-2 bandage system, as it claimed to help control the malodour. One week on the wound had improved; this gave the patient great confidence that finally, after several months of no progress with a previous bandage system she was turning a corner. Mrs A stated that the bandages were more comfortable than previous systems used and she was so pleased that the malodour had completely gone. Mrs A asked not to go back onto any other bandages at this time as she liked the new one so much.

By week two of applying HERO H-2 the nursing visits were reduced to once weekly. Four weeks later the ulcer had completely healed and Mrs A was fitted with hosiery.

Discussion

As Healthcare Professionals it is important to listen to how the patient feels, malodour is very subjective, and if the Healthcare Professional cannot smell the wound, it is often overlooked.

When assessing and documenting malodour, should we not be documenting not just our opinion, but that of our patients?

Conclusion

The HERO H-2 bandage system did exactly what it was designed to do and Mrs A expressed that the bandages removed the malodour previously experienced.

Malodour is a sensitive issue which does have an adverse effect for the patient. Through the use of HERO H-2 malodour can be reduced/eliminated thus improving the patient's quality of life and wellbeing.

Reference

1. Jones JE *et al* (2008) Impact of exudate and odour from chronic venous leg ulceration. *Nursing Standard*. 22, 45, 53-61. Date of acceptance: January 4 2008.

Method

A case study was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of a new innovative 2 layer compression bandage system that claimed to be odour reducing.

HERO H-2 is a 2 layer inelastic bandage system, the first layer contains pure aloe and cyclodextrin that work together to help bind malodour and give off a fresh scent.