Best Practice Communique 05 - 18

Remote Health Branch

Northern Territory Government
Department of Health and Community Services

Issue: Burns Gel Dressings

Raised by: Helen Gill (HCM, Kings Canyon)

Background: Proposal for a specific burns dressing.

Discussion: Several features of burns gel dressings that make them a superior product in managing the emergency dressing of burns are well documented, and include better immediate and subsequent pain relief, reduced tissue damage, reduced infection rates, easy storage, and ease of application and removal. But it is the advantage of these features overlaid against the management of trauma in the NT remote setting where large volumes of water are not readily available, that make these dressing an attractive proposition.

The main factors against use of gel dressings are cost, and their non availability through Stores.

Although cost is certainly higher than simple, or more conventional burns management techniques, the relative value due to the advantages outlined is not considered excessive. Long shelf life (5 years) is also an aid to a better relative value. Weighing cost against advantage, the Best Practice Group is willing to recommend the use of gel dressing for emergency burns, to be included as part of the standardised emergency equipment, but not for routine management of minor burns within health centres.

Supply issues may be overcome by addition to the Standard Stores list in the future, particularly as the DHCS hospital's Emergency Departments are beginning to use gel dressings in emergency burns management. In the meantime, supply is proposed as an initial distribution of a kit of dressings, backed up by replacement stock being available through the PPNs.

The gel dressings are recommended to be part of the IV Extras bag, which is an important kit in the event of a major burns scenario.

Gladwrap will remain as part of the standard emergency equipment. Although the gel dressings are obviously a first choice item, gladwrap will still have it's place for multiple burns greater than can be managed with the available gel dressings.

Consultation: Alison Mustapha (Burns CNC, RDH), Stores department, various Suppliers

References: Comparison of product information.

Outcome: **Burns specific gel dressings are recommended for inclusion in the Remote health Branch Standard Emergency equipment (within the IV Extras bag).** They are recommended primarily for emergency care away from health centres, and not for routine use of minor burns where management should be according to CARPA STM 4th Ed, pp30-31.

An order has been placed centrally and one burns kit will be distributed to each Remote Health Branch health centre. Replacement stock will be available from the PPNs.

An amendment to the standard emergency equipment lists will be made and circulated with the new kits.