

Case Study: What is the Cost of Pain? A Quantitative Model

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CLINICAL PROBLEM:

Barriers to changing practice and improving quality of life for patients include, but are not limited to, information, opportunity, support and financial resources. A consideration in changing current practice is the need for studies that closely examine cost and therapeutic efficacy to justify more costly treatments. Wound care is often a small part of the healthcare dollar, compared to the enormous costs of antibiotics, surgical procedures, incontinence, dialysis, transplantation, and the overall cost of caring for a rapidly increasing aging population.

The purpose case series was to examine the Costs of Pain to the patient, the clinician and to the facility and assess the overall value of more expensive wound care modalities in achieving positive patient and economic out comes. Only informed, concerned involvement by healthcare professionals in the economic arena will provide the needed treatments in a cost-effective manner.

DESCRIPTION OF PAST MANAGEMENT:

This case series of patients at a regional medical center included patients with moderate to severe skin injury secondary to burns and trauma. Prior to involvement of the CWS, dressing changes were extremely traumatic and painful to the patients, required extensive use of narcotic analgesia and nursing time also placing patients at risk for infection.

CURRENT CLINICAL APPROACH:

By utilizing best practice protocols and a non-traumatic contact layer dressing, decreasing dressing change frequency and time spent doing dressing changes, patient pain decreased and wounds progressed rapidly toward healing.

PATIENT OUTCOMES:

A cost model was developed to incorporate the total costs of dressing changes which demonstrated a 43% reduction in cost to the facility, reduction in pain and analgesic use and dramatic reduction in clinician time. This model for assessing the Cost of Pain has proven extremely successful in providing the support that this hospital has required to change practice and improve the quality of patient care.