Wounds research for patient benefit: a 5-year programme of research

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published August 2016
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar04130

Plain English summary

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DOI: 10.3310/pgfar04130

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Complex wounds are open wounds that heal from the base up and include leg ulcers, pressure ulcers and foot ulcers. Such complex wounds often affect older people. Care for people with complex wounds is typically delivered by community nurses, often in patients’ own homes. Complex wounds are very costly for the NHS and have a big impact on patients and their families. In the UK no routine data are collected about complex wound care so we know little about how common the different types of wounds are, which treatments are commonly used and what happens to patients over time. Research on complex wounds tends to be of poor quality and at the start of this work we did not know if existing research reflected patient and carer priorities in terms of the questions they had about complex wounds. The overall aim of the programme was to use research to optimise the quality of care and outcomes for people with, or at risk of, complex wounds.

Key findings

- Approximately 1.5 people per 1000 have a complex wound; pressure ulcers and venous leg ulcers are the most common types and patients are greatly troubled by the social consequences of complex wounds.
- It was not possible to implement a comprehensive, prospective complex wounds register, partly because usable clinical data were not routinely collected in community nursing services in the UK. If such a register could be implemented it could be useful in informing wound care services and help to answer important research questions.
- Most patients and health professionals regarded healing of the wound as the primary treatment goal.
- We worked with patients, clinicians and carers to develop a top 12 list of research priorities for the prevention and treatment of pressure ulcers.
- Research on which treatments are most effective at healing complex wounds was largely inadequate and several strategies for improving the research were identified.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0407-10428. The contractual start date was in July 2008. The final report began editorial review in July 2014 and was accepted for publication in September 2015. As the funder, the PGfAR programme agreed the research questions and study designs in advance with the investigators. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PGfAR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, CCF, NETSCC, PGfAR or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PGfAR programme or the Department of Health.

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