

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

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Plain English summary

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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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