



Pressure Ulcers eCourse

Glossary of Terms

Handout

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Abscess – Localized collection of pus in the tissues of the body, often accompanied by swelling and inflammation and frequently caused by bacteria.

Adjuvant – An antidepressant or antiepileptic medication.

Albumin – The main protein in human blood and the key to regulating osmotic pressure of blood.

Air-fluidized bed – Has chambers contain microspheres suspended in warm air that relieves pressure and eliminates shear and friction to trouble areas.

Alginate – Alginate dressings are derived from seaweed made of soft non-woven fibers, and are available as pads, ropes or ribbons. Alginate dressings are extremely lightweight, absorb many times their own weight, form a gel-like covering over the wound, and maintain a moist environment.

Alternating pressure mattress – Contains chambers filled with air or water that periodically circulates to create alternating low- and high-pressure areas. This action redistributes pressure while stimulating blood circulation.

Amino acids – Are the building blocks from which proteins are constructed.

Anaerobic – An organism or tissue living in the absence of air or free oxygen.

Anesthetic – Local anesthetics cause a reversible loss of sensation for a limited region of the body while maintaining consciousness.

Anorexia – The loss of appetite and inability to eat.

Antibiotics – A group of chemical substances having the capacity to inhibit the growth and destroy bacteria and other micro-organisms; used mainly in the treatment of infectious diseases.

Antiseptics – Agents that destroy or inhibit the growth and development of micro-organisms in or on living tissue.

Arginine – As an amino acid, arginine helps build proteins, but it also stimulates the secretion of growth hormone, helps remove ammonia from your body and has a role in healing wounds. If you're sick or under stress, you need to get extra amounts through food or supplements.

Atraumatic – Pertaining to therapies and therapeutic instruments / devices that are unlikely to cause tissue injury or damage.

Autolytic debridement – Autolysis is a highly selective form of slow debridement that occurs naturally in all wound types. Moisture retentive dressings can be used for this type of debridement.

Biologic dressing – Skin substitutes are a heterogeneous group of wound coverage materials that aid in wound closure and replace the functions of the skin, either temporarily or permanently, depending on the product characteristics.

Blood stasis – The slowing of blood flow due to factors such as hemorrhage, congestion or local ischemia.

Braden Scale – A commonly used tool to assess the risk of patients and residents developing pressure ulcers.

Braden Q Scale – This tool was developed for pressure ulcer risk identification in children ages 21 days to 8 years.

BWAT – The Bates-Jensen Wound Assessment Tool is used to measure the changes in wounds over time.

Cadexomer iodine –A dressing that absorbs exudate and particulate matter from the surface of granulating wounds and, as the dressing becomes moist, iodine is released. The product thus has the dual effect of cleansing the wound and exerting a bactericidal action.

Calories – A quantity of food capable of producing a given amount of energy.

Cellulitis – Inflammation of cellular tissue.

Cleansing –The process of using fluids to remove surface contaminants, bacteria and remnants of previous dressings from the wound surface and surrounding skin.

Coccyx – This is the small triangular bone forming the lower extremity of the spinal column in humans, consisting of four ankylosed rudimentary vertebrae.

Collagen – A class of extracellular proteins abundant in higher animals, forming strong insoluble fibers and serving as connective tissue between cells.

Collagen matrix dressing – Made of bovine or avian collage, these dressings encourage wound healing by stimulating the deposit of collagen fibers necessary for growth of tissue and blood vessels.

Colonization – The presence of bacteria on a body surface (like on the skin, mouth, intestines or airway) without causing disease in the person.

Comorbidities – Two or more conditions or diseases occurring together.

Crepitus – The grating sound of two ends of broken bone rubbing together.

Cytotoxicity – The destruction of cells caused by a toxic substance.

Debridement – The removal of foreign matter and dead tissue from a wound.

Decubitus ulcer – Another term for a pressure ulcer.

Dehydration – Dehydration occurs when water intake is insufficient to replace free water lost due to normal physiologic processes (*e.g.* breathing or urination) and other causes (*e.g.* diarrhea or vomiting).

Delirium – A disorder of the mental faculties, as in fevers, disturbances of consciousness, or intoxication, characterized by restlessness, excitement, and delusions.

Dermatitis – Inflammation of the skin; symptoms include redness, itching, and in some cases blistering.

Desiccation – The state of extreme dryness, or the process of extreme drying.

Dynamic support surfaces – These pressure redistribution devices are powered by electricity or pumps.

Edema – An accumulation of an excessive amount of watery fluid in cells, tissues, or serous cavities.

Emboli – Undissolved material carried by the blood and impacted in some part of the vascular system.

Empowerment – Philosophy that patients are active participants in, not passive recipients of, the caring process, and thus should be well informed about all aspects of their health, wellness status and disease state, to gain maximum health benefit within the context of their social demands.

Endotracheal tubes – A flexible plastic tube that is put into the mouth and then down into the trachea (airway) in order to ventilate the lungs.

Envelopment – The ability of a support surface to conform, so as to fit or mold around irregularities in the body.

Enzymatic debridement – Involves the use of enzymes from plants in combination with urea to digest the proteins in necrotic tissue.

EPUAP – European Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel.

Epithelial – Any biological tissue that covers a surface, or lines a cavity and performs various secretory, transporting or regulatory functions.

Epithelialization – To form a covering of epithelial cells over a wound.

Erythema – An abnormal redness of the skin due to local congestion such as in inflammation.

Eschar – Usually dry, tough, leathery, black tissue that is tightly adhered to the wound bed; when softened, eschar may turn brown or gray.

Excoriation – An abraded area where the skin is torn or worn off.

Exudate – A fluid that is exuded out of a tissue or its capillaries due to an injury or inflammation.

Fasciitis – An inflammation of the connective tissue that may be caused by streptococcal or other types of infection, an injury, or an autoimmune reaction.

Fibroblasts – A cell that contributes to the formation of connective tissue fibers.

Fluctuance – Fluctuance is an indication of the presence of pus in a bacterial infection.

Foam dressing – Are absorbent, sponge-like polymer dressings providing thermal insulation and a moist wound environment.

Friction – Occurs when the skin is rubbed against an external surface; often happens when turning, moving or boosting patients.

Gauze – Gauze is usually in the form of woven or non-woven cloth, and it is typically placed over the top of an open wound. Another type of bandage or medical tape may be used to hold the dressing in place until the wound heals.

Glamorgan Scale – The Glamorgan Pediatric Pressure Ulcer Risk Assessment Scale is suitable for use with children from birth to the age of 18 years.

Glutamine – Is the most abundant naturally occurring amino acid in the human body. In the treatment of pressure ulcers, glutamine functions as a fuel source for fibroblasts and epithelial cells.

Granulation – Granulation tissue is the pink / red moist tissue comprising new blood vessels that fill an open wound when it starts to heal.

HAPU – “hospital acquired pressure ulcers” or pressure ulcers that have developed in patients or residents while in care.

Hematoma – A circumscribed collection of blood, usually clotted, in a tissue or organ, caused by a break in a blood vessel.

Honey-impregnated – A dressing that has medical-grade honey in it.

Hydration – Taking in water to provide the body with adequate fluids for normal physiological functions.

Hydrocolloid – Made of carbohydrate-based material, these dressings are adhesive, moldable wafers that are impermeable to oxygen, water and water vapor. They help keep the wound moist and promote autolytic debridement.

Hydrogel – Made with a water or glycerin base, these dressings hydrate wounds and soften necrotic tissue. However, they provide limited absorption.

Hypermetabolism – Increased metabolism that often occurs during periods of stress and with many diseases.

Hyperreflexia – A condition in which the deep tendon reflexes are exaggerated.

Hypoalbuminemia – An abnormally low amount of albumin in the blood.

Hypoxia – Deficiency in the amount of oxygen reaching body tissues.

Iatrogenic – Induced in a patient by a physician's activity, manner, or therapy; often an infection or other complication of treatment.

Immersion – The depth of penetration or sinking into a support surface.

Incontinence – Unable to restrain natural discharges or evacuations of urine or feces.

Indurated – Hardened – as a soft tissue that becomes extremely firm.

Infection – Invasion by and multiplication of pathogenic microorganisms in a bodily part or tissue, which may produce subsequent tissue injury and progress to overt disease through a variety of cellular or toxic mechanisms.

Inflammation – A condition of redness, swelling, pain, tenderness, heat and disturbed function of an area of the body, especially as a reaction of tissues to injurious agents.

Irrigation cleansing – The use of a solution under pressure to remove debris and bacteria from a pressure ulcer wound.

Ischemia – A deficiency of blood due to functional constriction or obstruction of a blood vessel to a part of the body.

Low-air-loss mattress – Contain segmented air cushions that inflate to help redistribute pressure on skin surfaces and to minimize shearing force during repositioning. The beds also circulate cool air to promote evaporation and temperature reduction.

Maceration – To make soft by soaking or steeping in a liquid.

Malnutrition – Poor nutrition because of an insufficient or poorly balanced diet or faulty digestion or utilization of foods.

Malodor – A distinctive odor that is offensively unpleasant; may indicate a bacterial infection in the pressure ulcer wound.

Mechanical debridement – This non-selective method uses wet-to-dry saline dressings, hydrotherapy or pulsatile lavage to remove debris from the wound.

Metronidazole – A generic synthetic antibacterial compound available for both oral and intravenous use. It is indicated in the treatment of serious infections caused by susceptible anaerobic bacteria.

Micronutrients – Micronutrients or trace elements are nutrients that humans require in small quantities throughout life and include vitamins, iron, cobalt, chromium, copper, iodine, manganese, selenium, zinc and molybdenum.

Mottling – A diversifying spot or blotch of color.

Nasal cannula – A plastic tube that is attached to a portable or stationary oxygen tank.

Necrosis – Death of cells or tissues through injury or disease, especially in a localized area of the body.

Necrotic tissue – Dead cells resulting in wound tissue that is gray, brown, black and moist.

Nidus – Any structure that resembles a nest in appearance or function. A nidus is a breeding place where bacteria, parasites and other agents of disease lodge and develop.

Non-blanchable – When digital pressure is applied to an area of non-blanchable erythema, it does NOT pale, but remains reddened.

NPUAP – National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel (American).

NPO – This medical abbreviation means “nothing by mouth”, e.g., as per physician’s instruction to avoid food or beverage prior to surgery.

Norton Scale – This pressure ulcer risk assessment tool was developed for the elderly population in the United Kingdom.

Nutrition – The taking in and metabolism of nutrients (food and other nourishing material) by an organism so that life is maintained and growth can take place.

Occipital – Relating to the back of the head or skull.

Osteomyelitis – An inflammation of the bone and bone marrow, usually caused by a bacterial infection.

Oxygenation – The addition of oxygen to any system, including the human body. Oxygenation may also refer to the process of treating a patient with oxygen, or of combining a medication or other substance with oxygen.

Pallor – A condition of unusual or extreme paleness.

Paraplegia – Complete paralysis of the lower half of the body including both legs, usually caused by damage to the spinal cord.

Pathogen – Any disease-producing agent such as a virus, bacterium or other micro-organism.

Pedicle – A stalk through which a skin flap receives its blood supply until the skin flap is transferred to its intended site of attachment.

Peripheral vascular disease – All diseases caused by obstruction of the large arteries in the arms and legs.

Periwound – A periwound is simply the area of skin surrounding a wound. Usually the skin in this area is very thin and susceptible to tearing (skin stripping), infection, and allergic reactions.

Perspiration – A salty, watery fluid secreted by the sweat glands of the skin, especially when very warm or as a result of strenuous exertion; also known as sweat.

Pressure ulcer – A localized injury to the skin and underlying tissue usually over a bony prominence, as a result of pressure or shear. Other terms used are bed sore, pressure sore and decubitus ulcer.

Protein – Proteins are fundamental components of all living cells and include many substances, such as enzymes, hormones, and antibodies that are necessary for the proper functioning of an organism. They are essential in the diet for the growth and repair of tissue.

Pseudomonas – Any of several rod-shaped bacteria of the genus *Pseudomonas*, certain species of which are pathogenic for plants and animals.

Purulent – Wound drainage containing or composed of pus.

PUSH – The Pressure Ulcer Scale for Healing is a tool to monitor pressure ulcer healing over time.

Reperfusion – The restoration of blood flow to an organ or tissue that has had its blood supply cut off.

Redistribution – Pressure redistribution is the ability of a support surface to distribute load over the contact areas of the human body.

Repositioning – The act of changing an individual's body position to relieve pressure and enhance comfort.

Sacrum – A triangular bone made up of five fused vertebrae and forming the posterior section of the pelvis.

Scapula – Either of the two flat triangular bones, one on each side of the shoulder.

Senescent cells – Cells that have lost the ability to reproduce themselves.

Sepsis – Local or generalized invasion of the body by pathogenic micro-organisms or their toxins.

Seroma – A mass or swelling caused by the localized accumulation of serum within a tissue or organ.

Shear – Occurs when the skin remains stationary against an external surface while the movement of underlying tissue occurs.

Silicone dressing – A contact layer dressing designed to lie directly on the wound’s surface. Contact layer dressings are often made of silicone because of its non-allergic and non-stick properties.

Silver-impregnated – An antimicrobial dressing containing silver that has powerful antimicrobial and bactericidal properties.

Slough – Yellow, tan, or gray-white tissue that may be loose and stringy, or well adhered to the wound bed. It may be moist or dry.

Static support surfaces – These pressure redistribution devices do not require electricity and include surfaces such as air, foam, gel and water overlays and mattresses.

Surfactant – An agent that reduces the surface tension of oil or solid-water interfaces and therefore has cleaning properties.

Surgical debridement – The removal of foreign material and devitalized tissue using a scalpel or other sharp instrument.

Supine – The position of a person lying on their back with their face and front upward.

Support surface – Is a specialized device for pressure redistribution designed for the management of tissue load, microclimate and other therapeutic functions.

Suture line dehiscence – The bursting open of a surgically closed wound.

Systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) – A severe systemic response to a condition (as trauma, an infection, or a burn) that provokes an acute inflammatory reaction indicated by the presence of two or more of a group of symptoms.

Tachycardia – The abnormally rapid beating of the heart, i.e. over 100 beats per minute.

Tissue perfusion – The passage of blood and tissue fluid through the capillary bed.

Transcutaneous nerve stimulation – Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) is a therapy that uses low-voltage electrical current for pain relief.

Transparent film – Made of polyurethane, these dressings adhere to the skin and help maintain a moist wound environment. They promote autolytic debridement and stimulate formation of granulation tissue.

Tricyclic antidepressants – Tricyclic antidepressants are used to treat depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other mood disorders. They are also effective as analgesics so are used to treat chronic pain.

Topical – A term used to describe a medication that has effects only in a specific area, not throughout the body; usually is administered directly onto the skin.

TPN (total parenteral nutrition) – A solution containing all the required nutrients including protein, fat, calories, vitamins, and minerals, is injected into a vein over the course of several hours.

Trochanter – The two knobs at the top of the femur serving for the attachment of muscles between the thigh and pelvis.

Tunneling – Channeling that extends from any part of the wound and may pass through subcutaneous tissue and muscle.

Undermining – A closed pathway under the surface of the skin that is open only at the skin surface. Undermining often develops from shearing forces.

Vitamin C – A vitamin that promotes the growth, formation and maintenance of bones and teeth, the repair of tissues and blood vessels, and increases resistance to infections. It is also known as ascorbic acid.

Waterlow Scale – This is the most widely used pressure ulcer risk-assessment tool in Europe.

Wound healing – A process to restore to a state of soundness any injury that results in an interruption in the continuity of external surfaces of the body.

Zinc – A co-factor in many enzymes; involved in synthesis of some proteins and aids in wound healing and immune system.