The Wound Infection Institute – A New Global Platform for the Clinical Management of Infected Wounds


The Wound Infection Institute is an independent international group of clinicians, scientists and other professionals working in wound management, dedicated to furthering the advancement of infection control through best practice, education, training and research.

THE RISING TIDE OF INFECTION

Wound infection is one of the most challenging aspects of wound management today. It is a major contributor to healthcare costs and stipulates inoperable conditions for patients and carers. In the community, poor management of patients due to social and environmental factors is common while hospitals struggle to control drug resistant infections. Injudicious use of antibiotics has led to the emergence of resistant strains, and, with an ageing population of frailty patients who are more susceptible to infection, the problem can only get worse. In an attempt to control rising infection rates, policy makers and healthcare systems will apply well-intentioned targets and goals to healthcare providers, but rarely give the support and resources necessary to achieve their aims. For example, in the United States, healthcare systems will soon be unable to claim reimbursement for treating hospital-acquired infections; while in the UK hospitals are penalised if they fail to achieve specified reductions in infection rates.

The Wound Infection Institute was set up with the specific aim of providing support to everyone who is involved in this fight against wound infection.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WOUND INFECTION INSTITUTE

In 2006, a meeting was held in Budapest to explore the idea of providing support to everyone who is involved in this fight against wound infection. The Education sub-committee set out to assemble and assess the evidence underpinning critical aspects of infection diagnosis and management. Plans for the future include discussion boards to give members a forum for pooling their experience on difficult diagnostic or management problems, a literature archive with commentary, research data collection, implementing change in wound management, and areas of cutting-edge research that could have a significant impact on how wounds are diagnosed and managed in the future.

Consensus document. “Wound Infection in Clinical Practice” which will be launched at the 2008 meeting of the World Union of Wound Healing Societies is a consensus document that provides “broad, clear and safe guidance on the areas of diagnosis and the topical/systemic treatment of bacterial wound infection.” In his foreword, Professor Keith Harding says that the wide disciplinary and geographical representation of the panel ensures that the principles are both practical and adaptable for use in local settings worldwide.

Achievements to date

- A major difficulty in changing attitudes and practices in wound care is the apparent lack of evidence to support some of the major definitions that are widely used to classify wounds (Fig 1). The Wound Infection Institute members at its first AGM, Toronto, 2nd June

Fig 1 The Wound Infection Institute members at its first AGM, Toronto, 2nd June

The task that the Wound Infection Institute has set itself is enormous, but the meeting identified and agreed on a number of projects in these priority areas that would be of immediate benefit to its members:

- Education: There is a need for independent and comprehensive educational material that is available to everyone concerned with wound infection. The Education sub-committee will prepare proposals for a web-based educational programme that would be made available via the Wound Infection Institute website.

- Research: Recent data suggest that 60% of chronic wounds seen at first presentation are colonised with biofilms that impede healing, yet escape detection when current standard laboratory tests are applied. The Research sub-committee will investigate the possibility of providing a new biofilm testing protocol to improve detection and subsequent treatment of wounds colonised with biofilms.

- Governance: The Wound Infection Institute is grateful to Smith & Nephew Wound Management for an unrestricted grant and continuing support which has helped to establish the group. The Institute is now actively seeking support from other industry and non-industry sponsors, and is truly independent in its aims and activities.

The committee elected at the first AGM comprises:

- Chair: Keith Harding, UK
- Vice Chair: Terry Swanson, Australia
- Secretary: Caroline Dowsett, UK
- Treasurer: Marc Despatis, Canada
- Education sub-committee: Catherine Burrows, Canada
- Evidence sub-committee: Keryln Carville, Australia
- Research sub-committee: Gregory S Schultz, USA

One of the factors contributing to the problems of wound infection is the differing levels of understanding, interest and sense of responsibility amongst the various stakeholders. The Institute is multidisciplinary and welcomes applications from community care and the hospital, surgery and nursing management and healthcare commissioners – in short, anyone who is prepared to take an active part in tackling the growing problem of wound infection.

Joining is easy, simply visit the websites at www.woundinfection-institute.com.

BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE WOUND INFECTION INSTITUTE

The Wound Infection Institute is open to anyone who has a professional interest in wound infection, including administrative and support staff, industry and patients.

Can you describe the Wound Healing Process?

Bacterial Biofilms Are Major Barriers For Wound Healing

Scientific meeting. A range of excellent and thought-provoking clinical papers were delivered at the Toronto meeting on topics including: healthcare-acquired infections, data collection, implementing change in wound management, and areas of cutting-edge research that could have a significant impact on how wounds are diagnosed and managed in the future.

Institute website. To service a global membership, the website is the communications hub of the Institute (www.woundinfection-institute.com). Currently, members can find the latest news about the Institute, and resources such as a list of references on wound infection and collected data on topical antimicrobials.