

THE WOUND INFECTION INSTITUTE – A NEW GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR THE CLINICAL MANAGEMENT OF INFECTED WOUNDS

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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 around the world, and causes significant distress to patients and carers. In the community, poor management of patients due to social and environmental factors is common while hospitals struggle to control dramatic increases in hospital acquired infections. Injudicious use of antibiotics has led to the emergence of resistant strains, and, with an ageing population of frailer 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 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 level of interest and possible future directions for a group dedicated to this purpose. On June 2nd 2008, at a meeting in Toronto, the newly-formed Wound Infection Institute held its first formal Annual General Meeting, establishing itself as a truly independent body with elected officers and an agreed framework for future activities.



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 three priority areas that would be of immediate benefit to its members:

Education - There is an urgent 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

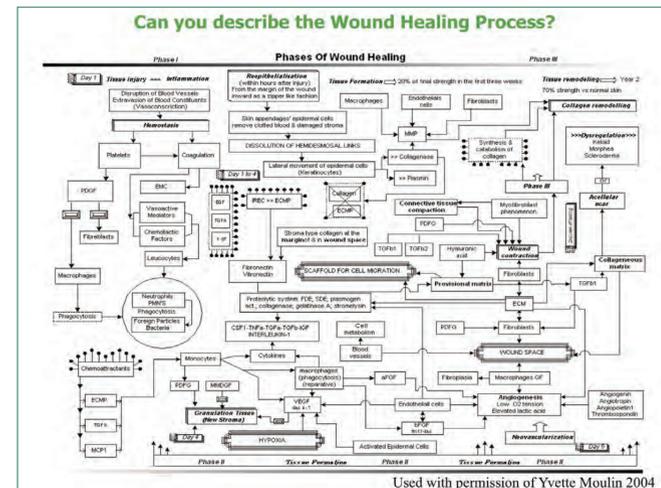


Fig 2 Complexity in wound healing - the need for education

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.

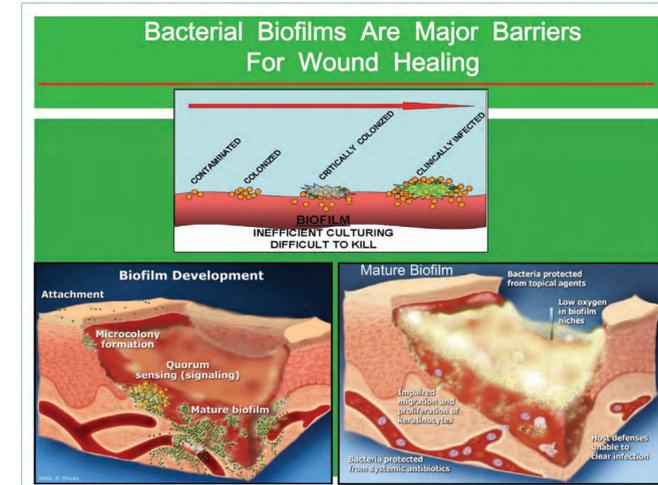


Fig 3 Biofilms – A major component of wound infection?

Evidence - A major difficulty in changing attitudes and practices in wound care is the apparent lack of evidence to support certain interventions or practices, and even to support some of the major definitions that are widely used in wound management. The Evidence sub-group identified a number of areas where literature searches would be carried out to assemble and assess the evidence underpinning critical aspects of infection diagnosis and management. As the Wound Infection Institute develops, members will be encouraged to propose and initiate projects in these areas.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

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.

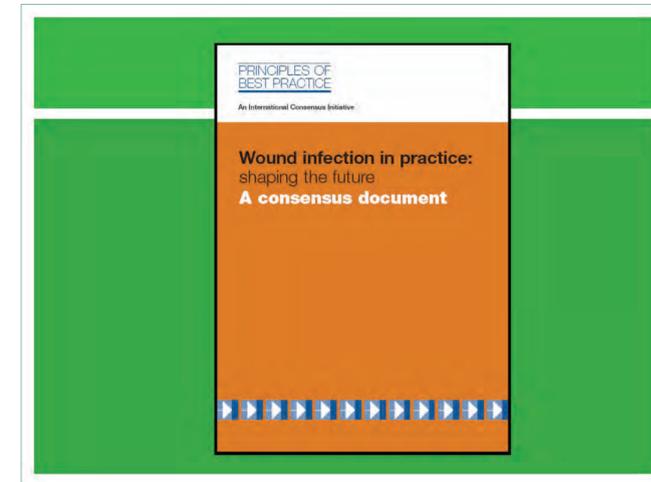


Fig 4 Consensus document

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.

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 and evidence rankings, the Wound Infection Institute educational programme, and expanded news sections to keep members up to date with developments in the area of wound infection. A significant series of presentation sets on wound infection management will be available very shortly.

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.

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 hospitals, 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 website at www.woundinfection-institute.com.

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:

- Keith Harding, UK** – Chair
- Heather Orsted, Canada** – Vice Chair
- David Leaper, UK** – Secretary
- David Keast, Canada** – Treasurer
- Jacqui Fletcher, UK** – Education sub-committee
- Keryln Carville, Australia** – Evidence sub-committee
- Gregory S Schultz, USA** – Research sub-committee
- Catherine Burrows, Canada**
- Marc Despatis, Canada**
- Caroline Dowsett, UK**
- Valerie Edwards-Jones, UK**
- Terry Swanson, Australia**

