

A chronic (long term) wound is a wound that has not progressed through the normal stages of wound healing. Consequently, a wound is considered chronic if; a) the wound does not heal, b) it heals slowly or partially, or c) it heals but then has recurred. Chronic wounds can cause pain, emotional and physical distress, and reduce the persons mobility and increase social isolation. This can also contribute to sleep disturbances, anxiety and depression, which can significantly affect quality of life.

Chronic wounds can have many causes and there can be many reasons why a wound won't heal in an individual. They can develop from a range of acute wounds including skin tears, pressure injuries, autoimmune or skin conditions, diabetic foot ulcers, surgical wounds, and vascular ulcers of the foot and leg.

Current treatments

The cause of a chronic wound must be identified before treatment can begin. This assessment includes an assessment of the persons general health, nutrition and medication.

Treatments are varied but can include regular dressings, cleaning and debridement, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, compression stockings, antibiotics, ultrasound and electromagnetic therapy, negative pressure wound therapy, skin grafts and dietary and lifestyle changes. A multidisciplinary approach is recommended.

The cause of the wound dictates the treatment including the choice of dressing. Moist wound dressings are now preferred. As ulcers may take months to heal, prevention is also important. People with diabetes particularly need instruction on how to take care of their feet.

Chronic Wounds and Medical Cannabis

The skin has its own endocannabinoid system, which is a key regulator of various processes, including those necessary for normal wound healing. There is scarce data on the use of cannabidiol (CBD) for wound healing. Preclinical evidence suggests topical (directly on the skin) application of CBD may be effective for some skin disorders, such as eczema, psoriasis, itching, and inflammatory conditions, confirmed clinical effectiveness and understanding of underlying molecular mechanisms have yet to be fully identified.

More robust large randomised controlled studies with standardised preparations of cannabis and long-term follow up are required to assess the effectiveness of cannabis in wound healing.

Support Organisations

Your GP or specialist

Community Nursing Services in your area

References

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