

PRESSURE ULCER IN PAEDIATRIC PATIENTS: A COMPLEX WOUND CARE

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Childhood is a challenging age for wound care, because development is divided into various evolving steps passing through neonate, infant, toddler, preschool, young school, teen, adolescent, and nearly adult ages. All these stages, together with other „at risk for wound patients“ such as preterm and very low birth weight infants, have to be approached differently from each other considering specific skin anatomical characteristics, evolution and maturation, body proportions and social activities. At the same time, advances in modern medicine and new technologies correlated with improved survival and/or palliative activities, i.e. intensive care treatment and equipment, lead to a new class of paediatric wounded patients, with fragile skin similar to that of elderly patients, and more at risk of breakdown, tears, undue friction and shearing forces. In addition, congenital malformations requiring surgery, genetic disorders, the so called „rare diseases“ and an increasing number of newly discovered syndromes affect the skin and soft tissues, altering elastin, collagen fibers, reducing the production of Growth Factors and modify the delicate balance of the skin microclimate in these patients.

As one of the more recently developed surgical multidisciplinary specialties, Paediatric Wound Care grew from the acknowledgement of the fact that children, and especially neonates and infants, have skin problems distinct from those seen in adults and elderly patients.

Even if a neonate is an “easy to handle” patient, he is not a small adult because of anatomical and physiopathological differences: sometimes you can tell at a glance that the skin is so fragile and breakable, being prone to undesirable high pressure effects.

Acute and chronic Ulcers as well as Ulcer related diseases continue to be the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among children all around the world. Soft tissue loss from infective, vascular, pressure, postsurgical and traumatic disorders often results in poor or delayed healing, painful wounds, and the need for repeated major surgical procedures. That is why Paediatric Wound Care has a mission to protect children with problems including disability, syndromes, malformations, immobility, life-saving devices and other insults to the skin surface.