

A Preliminary Evaluation of ActivHeal® range of 'Basic' Advanced Wound Care Products in St. John's Hospital, West Lothian Healthcare NHS Trust



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Why did we undertake the evaluation?

The evaluation of three ActivHeal® products came about because Scottish Healthcare Supplies, who monitor the Scottish contract for Wound Products, wanted feedback on how the products worked in clinical practice.

Basic alginates, films, foams, hydrocolloids and hydrogels have been around for almost twenty years and, whilst not exactly 'generic' in the pharmaceutical sense, their properties and performance are widely known and the major brands have little to distinguish them from the newer brands.

The ActivHeal® products have been independently tested in the laboratory environment, by the Surgical Material Testing Laboratory in Wales (Ref 04/1722). The in-vitro results show that the ActivHeal® dressings are broadly equivalent in performance to an equivalent branded in each class of dressing.

An initial clinical evaluation gave two different results and Medlogic approached the Tissue Viability Nurse at St. John's Hospital, Livingston to undertake a more structured evaluation. This took place in October/November 2004.

Who was involved?

The evaluation involved several of the Tissue Viability Link Nurses active within St. John's Hospital. They worked in a variety of wards so that a good mix of wounds would be likely to be seen.

This involved two Medical wards, one Care of the Elderly Rehab ward, the Burns Unit, Plastic Surgery ward and the Plastic Surgery Theatre.

How long was the evaluation over?

The evaluation took place over a four week time period and included any suitable wounds within the above named areas which would have been treated with an equivalent product. Evaluation forms, literature and support were provided by Medlogic.

What was evaluated?

The three products evaluated were the ActivHeal® alginate, hydrogel and hydrocolloid. They were compared to the comparable products already in use within the Trust (Table 1.)

Original Product	ActivHeal® Product
Kaltostat® (Convatec)	ActivHeal® alginate
Intrasite gel® (Smith & Nephew)	ActivHeal® hydrogel
Hydrocoll® (Paul Hartmann)	ActivHeal® hydrocolloid

Table 1: Products originally used and their ActivHeal® equivalents

What types of wounds were the products evaluated on?

Alginate

The alginate was evaluated on two graft donor site wounds applied in theatre and followed up through the ward areas.

Hydrogel

The hydrogel was evaluated on four different wounds including pre-tibial lacerations and pressure ulcers.

Hydrocolloid

The hydrocolloid was evaluated on eight different wounds again including pre-tibial lacerations and pressure ulcers.

What were the evaluation criteria?

The protocol used was very simple and comprised a list of fourteen properties relevant to the performance of a dressing in clinical use:

- Ability to absorb exudate
- Ability to retain exudate
- Wound healing rate
- Exhibits maceration on removal
- Softens necrotic tissue
- De-sloughs
- Adverse reaction
- Stays in place
- Moist wound environment
- Dressing change frequency
- Ease of application
- Ease of removal
- Clarity of instructions for use
- Patient comfort

The link nurses involved in the evaluation were asked to base their assessment on as many or as few of these fourteen properties that they felt were important in evaluating a dressing. They also had to rate the ActivHeal® dressing according to whether it was 'worse than', 'equivalent to' or 'better than' the original dressing.

Results of the evaluation

The factors considered important by the link nurses in assessing the dressings were all fourteen criteria for the hydrogel and hydrocolloid and the 'ability to absorb exudate', 'ability to retain exudate' and 'stays in place' for the alginate. There were no incidences of ActivHeal® advanced wound care dressings being

less than equivalent to the existing branded product on any of the three ActivHeal® ranges evaluated.

In a couple of cases the hydrogel performed with better ability to absorb exudate and to de-slough than the comparable product. And in a couple of cases the hydrocolloid performed better at staying in place, moist environment, dressing change frequency and patient comfort.

There were no problems with any of the products in use.

Outcomes

As a result of the evaluation it was decided to look at the cost benefits of using ActivHeal® products. When compared against the branded products there was a significant cost saving and it was decided, for these three dressings, that St. John's Hospital would change to the ActivHeal® range. This was organised in conjunction with pharmacy and Medlogic with posters and literature to support the changeover. This was commenced in August 2005 with a product information launch and then a gradual changeover to the new dressings as ward stocks were replaced.

Further developments

In West Lothian the Tissue Viability Service covers community as well as the hospital. The information about the products and changeover has been circulated to all District Nurses and Health Centres in the area to aid the nurse prescribers and GPs in their product choice and in providing cost-effective wound care.

As St. John's Hospital has recently become part of NHS Lothian - University Hospital Division the formulary for the whole Division will be being reviewed in 2006. The outcomes of this evaluation and the several months of regular product use in West Lothian will be taken into account when this is reviewed.

Conclusions

As professionals and public servants, we have a duty to ensure that the best possible use is made of the public funding that we manage. To this end, the issue of cost of treatment needs to be considered when making a clinical decision about the selection of wound care products. The hydrogel, hydrocolloid and alginate within the ActivHeal® range have allowed us to reduce the cost of treating wounds within West Lothian whilst still keeping the quality of wound care as an important issue.

