The influence of the patient’s compliance on the wound healing process – results of a longitudinal study

Dr. Roland Becker, Prof. Dr. Heinz Janßen
Institut für Gesundheits- und Pflegeökonomie (IGP)
Hochschule Bremen - University of Applied Sciences, 28199 Bremen, Germany
Phone: 0049-0421-5905-2763, Roland.Becker@hs-bremen.de or Heinz.Janssen@hs-bremen.de

Background
Chronic wounds are a widespread and very cost-intensive problem. An adequate care provision of chronic wounds therefore represents a big challenge both for the patients themselves as well as for society as a whole, particularly with regard to an ageing society and the increasing cost pressure. The necessity to reinforce integrative care structures can be regarded as a very important task, especially in Germany as the division between the different health care sectors – particularly between the ambulatory and the stationary sector – is traditionally very high, which leads to meaningful losses with regard to the efficiency of the related care provision. The relevance of this issue appears even higher if chronic wounds are regarded as a major cause of morbidity in the population (Franks 2007) and if the impact of chronic leg ulceration on the patients’ quality of life is taken into account.

Aim
Nowadays a multidisciplinary wound care provision system is often regarded as an optimal way to improve the treatment quality and, as a result, the patient’s quality of life, while reaching economic savings. It is, however, still unknown which impact the patients’ compliance might have in this context. The main aim of our study was therefore to investigate the impact of a lack of compliance on the treatment process.

Methods
Within the scope of a multidisciplinary wound care provision, data on the patients’ quality of life, medical parameters and costs were systematically collected and analysed in the long-run. Then the outcomes were compared between patients with a lack of compliance and patients with a sufficient compliance. A lack of compliance was defined by a clear and verifiable refusal of the wound care team instructions. The following figure gives an overview of the underlying methodology and the main measuring instruments that were used.

Results
All in all, our data analysis showed that the patients’ compliance plays a very important role for the whole wound healing process. For patients who showed a lack of compliance, the wound status showed a slight improvement in the beginning, but then changed significantly for the worse, almost back to the initial point (figure 2). The results related to the patients’ quality of life stay in line with this (figure 3).

Discussion
Our study revealed that the patients’ compliance has a high impact on the wound healing process and related to that, on the treatment costs and the patients’ quality of life. Therefore, a holistic treatment approach including further strategies to strengthen the patients’ compliance should be pursued. In this context, the specific reasons behind a lack of compliance should be considered. Only if the patients’ compliance is accounted for, a sustainable wound care provision can be reached.

For literature please contact author
Mail: roland.becker@hs-bremen.de