Dressing Materials for the Treatment of Pressure Ulcers in Patients in Long-Term Care Facilities: A Review

Context
Pressure ulcers are regions of localized damage to the skin and underlying tissues caused when constant pressure reduces blood flow to the area. People with impaired mobility are most at risk of developing these. Pressure ulcers increase the risk of mortality among geriatric patients by as much as 400%. They also increase the frequency and duration of hospitalization, and decrease the quality of life of affected patients.

The US National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel (NPUAP) staging system — the most commonly used system for classifying pressure ulcers — includes four stages representing progressive severity, from intact skin with non-blanchable redness of the localized area in stage I to full thickness tissue loss with exposed bone in stage IV.

Technology
Dressings are an integral part of pressure ulcer wound care. They protect ulcers from trauma and contamination, and they promote healing. A wide variety of dressings are available, many with debridement (removal of dead tissue), antimicrobial, and/or moisture control properties.

Issue
A review of the comparative clinical effectiveness of commonly used dressing materials for stages III and IV pressure ulcers in seniors confined to beds in long-term care facilities, as well as of evidence-based guidelines regarding their use, will help inform the use of dressings to treat pressure ulcers in these patients.

Methods
A limited literature search was conducted of key resources, and titles and abstracts of the retrieved publications were reviewed. Full-text publications were evaluated for final article selection according to predetermined selection criteria (population, intervention, comparator, outcomes, and study designs).

Key Messages
- For the treatment of stage III and stage IV pressure ulcers in seniors confined to beds in long-term care facilities, no evidence was found to recommend one type of commonly used wound dressing over another.
- In the general population, radiant heat dressings may result in faster healing rates of stage III and stage IV pressure ulcers compared with other dressings (based on limited evidence).

Results
The literature search identified 512 citations, with no additional articles identified from other sources. After screening the abstracts, 7 were deemed potentially relevant and 3 met the criteria for inclusion in this review — 2 health technology assessments and 1 systematic review.

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