Burns First Aid – Are we getting the message across?

Claire Swales and Veronica Wagstaff

The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals
NHS Trust

Introduction

Burn Prevention is one of the primary aims of the British Burn Association and should be addressed by burn services (National Network for Burn Care, 2013). The importance of first aid following a burn injury is paramount in reducing the severity of burn injury (Shrivastava & Goel, 2010). Considering that the majority of burn injuries occur within the home it is therefore beneficial that all individuals have the appropriate knowledge to provide immediate treatment, given the effect this can have on outcome.

Method

During the recent National Burn Awareness Day a simple questionnaire was devised and used to establish the knowledge of the general public with regards to first aid following a burn injury. Whilst analysing this data, it was decided to repeat the questionnaire and compare the results with individuals (both adults and children) who had attended the burn service and capture this information at different stages of their treatment to demonstrate how effective the burn service is at giving first aid advice.

General Public

- Did not know what to do
- Aware of exact recommendations
- Thought they knew what to do but gave incorrect information

Individuals who had attended the burn service

- Did not know what to do
- Aware of exact recommendations
- Thought they knew what to do but gave incorrect information

General Public – There were 169 respondents in total, of which 12.4 % admitted they did not know what to do following a burn injury. 10.6% were aware of the exact recommendations of cooling the burn wound for 20 minutes with cool running water. Worryingly, 76.9% of the general public asked, suggested that they know what to do but then gave incorrect information. Burn Service – Out of 138 respondents, 6.5 % suggested they did not know what to do following a burn injury, 34. 7 % were aware of the recommendations and 58.6% indicated that they were aware of the procedure but were incorrect.

Discussion

This audit has highlighted that the general public do not have the appropriate knowledge in relation to first aid that is required to improve the outcome of burn injuries. It has also raised concerns that the burn service is not as effective at delivering the message of the importance of first aid as it could be. It has been acknowledged that following a burn injury individuals are more likely to be receptive to such advice (Silverstein, 2004) and therefore every opportunity should be used to achieve this.

National Network for Burn Care (2013) 'National Burn Care Standards.' London
Shrivastava, P. & Goel, A. (2010) Post-burn scars and scar contractures. *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery*. 43 (3) 63-71.
Silverstein, P. (2004). Burn prevention. *Journal of burn care and rehabilitation*; 25(6):500.

Method

Burn Services are in an ideal position to educate the public on appropriate first aid following burn injury. Furthermore, the National Burns Awareness Day is a perfect opportunity to engage with the public and promote first aid and provide burn prevention. However improvements in practice are required within our service to ensure that adequate information about first aid is given; a leaflet has been devised and is to be handed out and discussed when patients are discharged from the service. Given that burn care is expensive and can be complex burn prevention must be integral to future practice.

Contact Details

Claire Swales (Clinical Nurse Specialist)
claire.swales@midyorks.nhs.uk
Veronica Wagstaff (Burns Specialist
Discharge Coordinator)
veronica.wagstaff@midyorks.nhs.uk