SAMPLE POLICY ON SKIN TEAR MANAGEMENT

This document is not meant to be used “as is” and is only being distributed as an example of the kind of policy you may wish to implement in your facility. Because different types of facilities have different requirements and staffing, there is no “one size fits all” policy statement related to skin tears. We suggest that you consult with your legal counsel and clinical managers in developing this or any policy or procedure.

Purpose

To provide comprehensive management of skin tear trauma.

Definitions

Payne Martin Category – Common, uniform language standardizing the skin tear description and degree of injury for documenting, tracking and trending.

Skin Tear – Traumatic wound which occurs most often on extremities resulting in the separation of the epidermis from the dermis or both the epidermis and the dermis from the underlying structures.

Management Interventions

1. Wound assessment applying The Payne-Martin method of categorizing skin tears:
   a. Category I - without tissue loss either linear, or with a flap that closes the tear to within an approximation of 1mm of the wound edges
   b. Category II - partial tissue loss, considered scant when the loss is 25% or less and moderate or large when the tissue loss is more than 25%.
   c. Category III - complete tissue loss or no epidermal flap covering the injury

2. Skin tear management
   a. Gently clean the skin tear with normal saline
   b. Let the area air dry or pat dry carefully
   c. Approximate the skin tear flap with either a moistened cotton applicator or sterile forceps
   d. Apply petroleum-based ointment, steri-strips or a moist non-adherent wound dressing
   e. Use caution if using film dressings as skin damage can occur when removing this dressing
   f. Consider putting an arrow to indicate the direction of the skin tear on the dressing to minimize any further skin injury during dressing removal
   g. Always assess the size of the skin tear, consider doing a wound tracing
   h. Document assessment and treatment findings
References


