

Developing Non-Burn Specialist Allied Health Staff Knowledge

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Introduction

There are four regional burns units in New Zealand that accept burn patients that meet ANZBA referral criteria. For a burn that does not meet the criteria for referral, care is provided locally. Therapists (occupational therapy and physiotherapy) from local hospitals lack specialist knowledge and may feel unsupported and anxious in their care of burn patients. Additionally, undergraduate degrees provide minimal training in burns; therefore 'on-the-job' training is the main form of learning. Three key questions were posed:

- What is the level of burn training received by the current workforce?
- What is therapists perceived level of knowledge in the treatment of burn patients?
- How the therapists would like knowledge gaps to be addressed?

Survey Distribution

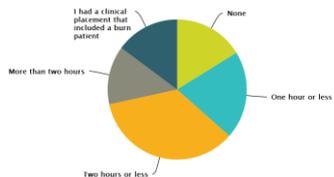
The survey was formulated on the Survey Monkey website and was distributed via a previously gathered list of professional leaders, physiotherapists and occupational therapists who are employed predominantly for non-burn care, but may be required to deliver care to a burn patient. Therapists were encouraged to share the link with their relevant colleagues.

Results

61 responses were received:

- 75.5% were NZ trained. 24.5% were overseas trained (United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia and the Netherlands)
- 72% had 2 hours training or less as undergraduates irrespective of their country of training

How many hours of training dedicated to Burns did you receive as an undergraduate?



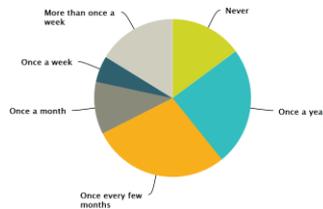
Answer Choices	Responses
None	16.22% 12
One hour or less	20.27% 15
Two hours or less	35.14% 26
More than two hours	13.51% 10
I had a clinical placement that included a burn patient	14.86% 11
Total	74

Current Caseloads

- 18% of respondents have not treated a burn patient
- 82% treat a burn patient \geq once a year
- 15% treat burn patients \geq once a week

- Over half the therapists felt that scar management and splint making was not within their role and that they would never treat someone for it.

How often would you treat a patient with a burn (of any size / depth)?



Therapist Perceived Knowledge in Treatment of Burns

Ranking of learning needs was completed by each therapist for nine topics. This identified the areas in which therapist had less knowledge and would like further education on.

'I feel safe and confident treating inhalation injuries and could discuss the pathophysiology & treatment options easily'.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Safe but not confident	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable to my scope of practice
20.27% 15	20.27% 15	33.78% 25	12.16% 9	5.41% 4	8.11% 6

'I feel safe and confident treating a patient with a 35% TBSA burn injury or higher in an acute setting prior to transfer to a regional unit and in the rehabilitation setting on return'.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Safe but not confident	Agree	Strongly agree
18.92% 14	24.32% 18	21.62% 16	22.97% 17	12.16% 9

Key finding: Therapists in New Zealand outside of specialist burns units lack confidence and knowledge in the treatment of burn patients, especially if there is an inhalation injury

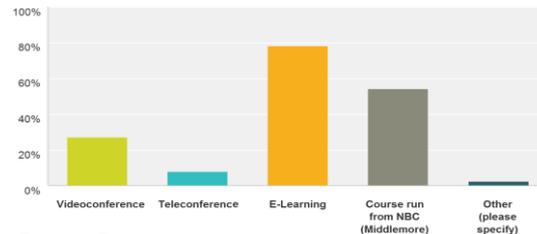
Areas identified as requiring further knowledge:

- Pathophysiology
- Burn exercises
- Scar management
- Grafts, flaps & skin substitutes

Addressing Knowledge Gaps

Most (97%) respondents identified that an education program directed at rotational staff level would be beneficial and their preferred method of delivery was e-learning. An e-learning package would provide easy access for rotational staff and be useful for general staff turn over. An annual course would result in staff waiting for longer periods to receive training; however a high percentage agreed that a course held at the National Burn Centre would be helpful. This would be a good way to re-enforce e-learning and/or allow staff to refresh their skills with managing larger burns in particular.

Would you find a nationwide tutorial program aimed at new graduate and rotational staff level useful? If yes, how would you like this delivered?



Future Directions

- Investigation will be made into the viability of developing an e-learning package through CMDHB (site of the National Burn Centre)
- A regular videoconference in-service programme would be beneficial to allow support of staff outside of regional units and to keep all therapists working in burns up to date with current best practise.