

Implementing a Burns Protocol into the Emergency Department

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Abstract:

Sandringham Hospital Emergency Department reviews approximately 130 burns per year. When a patient presents to the Emergency Department with a burn injury, there is often huge variation amongst medical and nursing staff in both the assessment of the burn and the most appropriate dressing product to use. There is also uncertainty re the need to transfer the patient to a specialised burn unit at the time of injury or to have them reviewed at a later time.

To ensure these patients were being treated in line with the best practice, a decision was made to develop a protocol for the assessment and management of burns and to impellent a 'Burns box', using a review of the research and literature and consultation with expert opinion as the basis. The burns protocol consists of an Audit and Paediatric Burns Assessment Chart and a resource folder which provides direction on dressing procedures, estimating percentage of total burns surface area (TBSA), management of paediatric burns, blister management, chemical burns and transfer criteria. Standardised transfer letters and letters to general practitioners as well as fact sheets for the patients have also been included. The protocol was implemented in November 2007 and it s use has now extended to our local general practices and other emergency departments in Victoria.

The introduction of the standardised Burn Protocol has resulted in appropriate referrals to the burns referral centres, appropriate assessment, dressing and review of burns and excellent patient outcomes.