Wound Dressings During Radiotherapy for Cancer: A Survey of Practice

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**Background:** Patients undergoing radiotherapy may experience changes to the skin that require dressings. Recommendations regarding radiating through wound dressings have been variable and relate to the concern regarding surface dose increase or bolus effect.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this article is to identify current evidence and practice through literature review and a national environmental scan.

**Methods:** Nurses from 18 radiation oncology centers in Canada were surveyed about current practice. In-depth telephone interviews were conducted with four nurse participants to further understand the context of this issue within the nursing practice environment.

**Findings:** The integrated results of the study were reviewed with five clinical experts to make recommendations for research, practice, leadership, and policy. Implications for clinical practice included the involvement of radiation oncology nurses in the treatment planning team, development of clinical practice tools, and the relevance of the Person-Centered Nursing framework for wound management during radiotherapy.

**Literature Review**

Radiation-induced dermatitis is one of the most common side effects of external beam radiotherapy (Harris et al., 2012) and has the potential to affect an individual's quality of life. Patients with dermatitis may suffer in a variety of ways: changes in body image, physical discomfort such as pain and itching, and difficulty with activities of daily living (McQuestion, 2006). If the resulting wounds require a dressing, clinicians have to choose from a plethora of dressing products. Dressings are chosen taking into account goals of care such as managing exudate, facilitating a moist wound environment, and minimizing pain and bleeding. These products often include antimicrobial dressings—silver being the most common or popular among...