

What is important when measuring health-related quality of life in patients with burn scars: Patient perspectives.

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Introduction

Understanding the impact of burn scarring and its treatment, from the patient's perspective, is at the core of reporting health-related quality of life.

Method

A cross-sectional design using purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews was employed. Participants were asked to describe features about their (or their child's) burn scars (such as changes to the look and feel over time), as well as what they would consider as visibility to others. Three raters completed content and inductive thematic analysis.

Results

Twenty-one participants (10 adults, 11 children) with burn scars and nine caregivers of children with burn scars and aged below 8 years participated. Participants were 3 weeks to 37 years (median 2 years) post-burn when interviewed. Their burn scars were distributed predominantly to upper limb (30.7%) and lower limb (30.7%). TBSA ranged from <5%-84%. 90% (n=19) were grafted to heal the initial wounds, with almost half (48%) having undergone further scar reconstruction. Two impacts of burn scars predominated: burn scar impairments (sensory and physical) and burn scar treatment. Seven themes emerged relating to the impacts of burn scars: personal, environmental, physical functioning, social functioning, cognitive functioning, emotional, psychological. Pre-morbid functioning and changes over time are also included.

Discussion

This paper will present a conceptual model of burn scarring that has been developed from patient reports. Patient-led descriptions of scars were used to construct definitions of scarring (including what makes for a good vs bad scar) that will be presented.

Conclusion

This model will offer both clinical and research health professionals insights into the complex inter-relationships between factors contributing to burn scar health-related quality of life, from a patient's perspective.

Key Words

Health-related quality of life, burn scar, allied health

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- Prevention
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