

Assessment of Itch: What Tools Are Available?

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Background

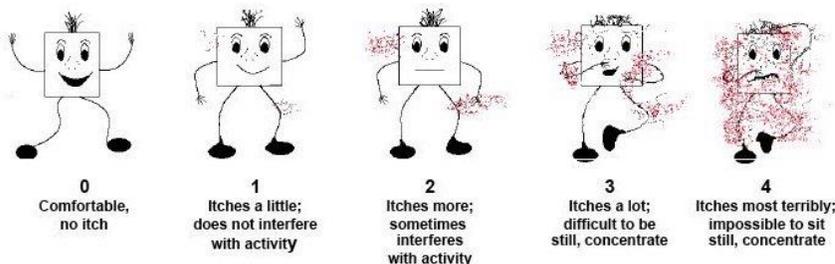
Itch can be a debilitating consequence in burns patients with up to 98% of adults suffering from burns related itch (1). The first stage of itch management is its recognition and assessment. This can be particularly challenging in paediatric patients. We provide a brief overview of assessment tools for evaluating itch in burns patients.

Method

Broad search terms were used to complete a comprehensive search of Pubmed. Only tools that are validated in English were included in this study. Seven itch assessment tools were reviewed.

The Itch Man

(6). Itch Man Scale (©2000, Blakeney and Marvin).



Discussion

The *Numeric Rating Scale (NRS)* and *Visual Analogue Scale (VAS)* are both quantitative scales that are quick and effective in their application. A number or picture is assigned to itch severity. *The Itch Man* is a five point Likert scale working on similar principles for the paediatric population (see image below).

The Toronto Paediatric Itch Scale is validated for patients under five years of age (2). It is an observational tool in which care providers monitor behavior and apply it to a scale. Moderate interobserver variation is seen.

Itch can cause significant morbidity and have major impacts on patients lives. The *5-Dimension (5-D) Itch Scale* considers degree, duration, direction, disability and distribution of itch (3). A modified *4-Dimension Scale* has also been developed (4). *The Burns Itch Questionnaire* is a wholistic assessment tool assessing itch severity, sleep interference and impact on daily life (5).

Conclusion

Accurate itch assessment and its impact is vital when managing itch effectively following burns. There are seven validated itch assessment tools available in the English language to assist in the assessment of itch in burns patients.

References

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