

## Unusual Skin Conditions – Part 3

### Kennedy Terminal Ulcer

#### What Is It?

The Kennedy Terminal Ulcer is a special subgroup of pressure injuries that some individuals develop as they are dying. The American Medical Directors Association in their guideline *Pressure Ulcers in the Long Term Care Setting* notes that the Kennedy Terminal Ulcer is an unavoidable pressure ulcer.

#### How Does It Occur?

The proposed etiology of the Kennedy Terminal Ulcer is that of skin organ failure, which has recently been termed SCALE (Skin Changes at Life's End). Although a potential marker of impending death, the Kennedy Terminal Ulcer generally is not the actual cause of death. The ulcer has been observed to usually be shaped like a pear, butterfly, or horseshoe, and located predominantly on the coccyx or sacrum, but it has been reported in other anatomical areas. The ulcers exhibit a variety of colors including red, yellow, or black and have sudden onset. In some situations, the ulcer may first appear as a simple abrasion or spot on the skin, which rapidly deteriorates to a full thickness ulcer in a matter of hours or days.

#### How Is It Treated?

Kennedy Terminal Ulcers are treated symptomatically as with any other type of pressure injury. When it first presents as intact, blanchable or non-blanchable erythema, pressure relief by frequent turning and appropriate support surfaces are necessary. When the KCT becomes a Stage 2 with minimal drainage, a hydrocolloid, hydrogel gauze, collagen, xeroform or petroleum gauze maybe indicated. As it digresses to a Stage 3, 4 or unstageable ulcer with moderate to heavy drainage, calcium alginates (with or without silver) or honey alginates may be indicated as well as foam dressings to control the exudate.

#### Sources:

1. Joy Schank, RN, MSN, ANP, CWOON, Ostomy and Wound Management, 08/08/13, <http://www.o-wm.com/exclusives/notes-practice-elder-abuse-or-kennedy-terminal-ulcer>
2. <http://www.o-wm.com/content/pressure-ulcers-avoidable-or-unavoidable-results-national-pressure-ulcer-advisory-panel-cons?page=0,5>
3. <http://www.o-wm.com/content/understanding-kennedy-terminal-ulcer?page=0,0>
4. <http://www.kennedyterminalulcer.com/>



*Long-term care resident diagnosed with a Kennedy Terminal Ulcer*



*Kennedy Terminal Ulcer in the sacral area of a multiple sclerosis patient.*

## Inservice Education

Gentell Wound Education Specialists are available to assist with education in your facility. Some of our most popular topics are:

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- Preparing for a State Survey
- Skin Integrity & Wound Management
- Documentation

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