

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, CWOCN, 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:

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

We can also create custom inservice trainings. Speak to your Gentell representative for more information.

Gentell leads the wound care industry in new product development and innovative cost-containment (capitation) programs for hospitals, nursing homes and home health agencies. For more information, call 800-840-9041 or visit our website at www.gentell.com