

Optimising burn care in correctional facilities: A collaborative approach

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ABSTRACT

Introduction/ background

Western Australia covers 2.5 million square km and is home to 11% of Australia's total population. There are 14 public prisons and 2 private prisons in WA.

Transporting prisoners to hospital for treatment is a complex process with considerable fiscal costs and safety risks to Corrective Services and the Department of Health.

Network development and telemedicine are integral to the appropriate and timely initial and ongoing care of a prisoner who sustains a burn injury.

Aim

The aim of the digital photo review clinic is to prevent unnecessary transfer of prisoners with a burn injury to Fiona Stanley Hospital in Perth. Only prisoners with major burns or those requiring surgery are transported to the hospital wherever possible.

Method

Digital photos are sent with prisoner and prison security consent to a designated email address. An automatic reply generates a referral form, contact information and burn wound dressing advice for out of hours assistance. The prison is contacted and a dialogue ensues, with burn management guidance and transfer necessity determined. Long-term follow up is via videoconferencing.

Results/Outcomes

Utilising digital images for burn wound management in the prison population ensures that prisoners receive timely and appropriate burn care while removing the safety risks associated with prisoner transfer. The process reduces the fiscal cost to the Department of Health and Corrective Services departments. This collaboration also provides professional development for Corrective Services clinicians as well as decreasing the isolation of health professionals who work outside mainstream health.

Recommendations

Provide ongoing education to Corrective Services clinicians and encourage referral via digital imaging clinic in preference to transferring the prisoner with a minor burn. Liaise with ED to refer via digital imaging clinic rather than face to face clinic for minor burns.