

## Under the Microscope

### With Dale Edgar

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People suffering from a burns injury may soon benefit from a new trial which could see burns patients taking a more proactive role in their recovery.

Thanks to the benefit of a \$77,000 research grant from the State Health Research Advisory Council (SHRAC), the team of Royal Perth Hospital burn management specialists led by Senior Physiotherapist and burns expert Mr Dale Edgar, are examining the benefits of using tailored self-management packages for some burn patients.

Mr Edgar said that previous research, conducted by the RPH Burn Team, suggested there could be a better way to maintain high quality burn care for patients while minimising the inconvenience of multiple outpatient visits, and minimising the financial cost to the health service.

“The aim of this project is to test a new treatment strategy which will benefit both the patient and the health system,” Mr Edgar said.

Currently, once a burn patient is discharged from hospital, they require multi-disciplinary follow up, including dressing and wound changes, functional rehabilitation and scar management

“A comprehensive and multi-disciplinary self- management pack will be given to the patient and this will equip them with everything they need to continue their burn care at home where appropriate,” Mr Edgar said.

It is estimated that around 400 burn patients each year can be managed successfully with markedly reduced outpatient clinic contact using this individually tailored form of self-management and phone, mail or telehealth monitoring.

“The saving to the individual is significant both in financial costs but also in time and convenience,” Mr Edgar said.

It is estimated that the implementation of a patient self management system can save around 790 hospital based appointments, a saving of around \$83,500 in a one year period.

Data collected over the last two and a half years indicates that attendances could be reduced for at least 25% of adult patients without it affecting their recovery.

Despite reducing the number and severity of burn cases as a whole, with the mining sector and WA population rapidly growing, it is likely that there will be a continued increase in burn related injuries.

Mr Edgar believes that using this research in tandem with the industrial sector, will allow them to improve the processes put in place and may reduce the severity of injuries over time.



Royal Perth  
Hospital

Royal Perth Hospital continues to be a world leader in the research and treatment of burn care, and with patients surviving more extensive burn injuries, it is becoming increasingly important to come up with more efficient and innovative ways to treat patients.

Mr Edgar said more research was needed into burn injuries to improve the quality of the scars and functional outcomes. The Burns Service of Western Australia (BSWA) at Royal Perth Hospital is continually looking at developing new and efficient ways of treating burn patients.

**Media Contact:**

Joanne Hill | **A/Manager Public Relations** | **Royal Perth Hospital** | **M 0404 894 034**