



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## Burn Model System Newsletter

Winter 2011



### What is Pressure Garment Therapy?

Pressure garment therapy involves the use of custom-fit elastic garments that are worn once a burn wound has healed. This garment applies a known amount of pressure to the healed skin/scar in order to reduce the formation

of hypertrophic scar (raised, reddened, irritated scar that can develop after healing of a grafted or ungrafted burn wound). Typically, custom-fit garments are worn 23 hours/day for up to one or two years from injury. They

require a doctor's prescription and must be measured and fit for each individual patient.

Here at Harborview, Heidi Federspiel (and burn care therapists in her absence) measures for these specialized garments (see the Provider Profile below).

### Burn Injury Information Group

The burn injury informational support group meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 1-2:00pm in room 8EH-50 at Harborview Medical Center. This

group is open to all burn survivors and their families.

Upcoming meetings are January 19th, February 16th, March 16th, 2011. They are sponsored by the

Northwest Burn Foundation and are at no charge. You can also participate by phone; contact Dr. Shelley Wiechman at 206-744-4439 and she will provide all necessary information.

### Provider Profile - Heidi Federspiel, BS

Custom pressure garments are measured and fit by Heidi Federspiel, who has close to 20 years experience in the field. Working closely with our team of burn care therapists, Heidi sees both inpatients and outpatients for the initial consultation. At this time she takes detailed measurements to include circumferences (the distance around a finger, arm, or leg) and lengths of body areas in need of pressure. For example, a glove fit to a burn-injured hand requires about 24 different measurements. The length of the initial visit varies, depending on the number of garments to be measured and the complexity of each.

To ensure the very best fit, initially only one set of garments is typically ordered. Then, once certain of the fit, a second set is made. Two sets

of garments allow the patient to wear one set while the other is being cleaned (hand or gentle machine wash using a mild soap and air-dried). Patients are instructed to wear their garments at least 23 hours/day - removing them only to shower or bathe. With children, several sets of garments may be required as they grow over the course of their recovery.

Custom-fit pressure garments come in a variety of colors - to be chosen by the patient. The expense is usually covered by all major insurances. The total length of time garments are worn varies and is determined by the burn physician and therapist.

If you have any questions about your pressure garments, contact the Harborview Burn Center Outpatient Clinic.

### Research Update

With funding from several foundations and agencies - to include the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), we have recently completed a study concerning the effectiveness of custom-fit pressure garment therapy after a burn injury.

Dr. Loren Engrav, Dept of Surgery/ Division of Plastic Surgery, was the study primary investigator. Study findings have been published in the journal, *Burns*. Visit our website for more information - <https://depts.washington.edu/uwnidrr/> or [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com).

This study took over 12 years to complete and included objective measures of scarring following treatment with normal and low compression. The authors conclude that pressure garment therapy is effective, but that the clinical benefit is restricted to those patients with moderate or severe scarring.

Recommendations for clinical practice and use are provided.

### Did You Know?

In the U.S. the average length of hospital stay for burn survivors is approximately 1 day per percent burn. (American Burn Association National Burn Repository, 2009)

### Visit our website at

<https://depts.washington.edu/uwnidrr/> for more information.

To reach the UW/HMC Burn Center Clinic, call 206-744-5735.