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MANIPULATING THE MICROCLIMATE AT THE INTERFACE OF TISSUE LOAD AND SUPPORT SURFACE

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Aim: The goal of this abstract is to present a guideline for maintenance of skin integrity that is challenged by excess moisture. The purpose of this abstract is to present and critically analyze the evidence for managing the heat and humidity at the interface of the incontinent patient and support surface.

Methods: The methodology consists of a literature search with review of the data and integration of an informal survey of the current practice to formulate a set of clinical recommendations based upon the available evidence.

Results: The result is a bundle of clinical recommendations related to maintaining the optimal microclimate of the skin at the interface of the support surface.

Discussion: Excess moisture on the epidermal surface is one factor for potential alteration of the skin integrity. Individuals with impaired mobility who utilize a support surface and experience loss of urine due to incontinence pose a challenge to maintain intact skin. Low air loss (LAL) is defined as a feature of a support surface that provides a flow of air to assist in managing the heat and humidity (microclimate) of the skin. Use of this feature is one intervention for manipulating the microclimate. When implementing LAL the immediate question arises concerning use of an absorbent underpad. Evidence shows a layer placed between the skin and the support surface has the potential to alter the ability of the support surface to redistribute pressure. In the case of incontinence, the underpad also has the potential to act as a barrier to the LAL feature. Dialogue among clinicians about this clinical dilemma continues with an identified need to offer an evidence based solution.