4

HOW ARE YOU MANAGING SKIN INTEGRITY DURING TEMPERATURE MANAGEMENT?

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Aim: The purpose of this abstract is to offer guidance on the assessment, documentation and interventions for the preservation of intact skin during surface cooling for therapeutic hypothermia. The objective is to raise awareness of skin integrity during therapeutic cooling and to offer evidence based recommendations. The applications of temperature management and therapeutic hypothermia are multiplying exponentially and the need to champion skin integrity is a challenge to be addressed.

Method: A literature review, a consensus of expert opinion and feedback from user experience will be used to examine the issue and construct a clinical guideline.

Results: The outcome is an educational resource for clinical recommendations on the management of skin integrity during temperature management, specifically therapeutic cooling.

Discussion: Recent studies have indicated that core body temperature be addressed to optimize neurological outcomes in a variety of clinical conditions including stroke, post-cardiac arrest and trauma. Temperature regulation, specifically surface cooling with Body Wraps or blankets directly in contact with the skin, is being used. The epidermal surface is in direct contact with the therapeutic cooling pads or wraps for extended periods of time depending upon the clinical indication. The microclimate at the epidermal interface may be affected by temperature, humidity and the mechanical forces of pressure, compression, and friction. An increased awareness of the effect of surface cooling on the skin is opening up new opportunities for clinical nursing expertise. Clinical protocols for temperature management are being developed and implemented and questions are arising as to the management of potential skin changes that may be secondary to surface cooling.

It is recognized that skin integrity must be a consideration when utilizing surface cooling. The guidelines offered will address this consideration.