

CASE STUDY: PACKING COMPARED TO NON-PACKING OF PILONIDAL SINUS CAVITIES AFTER INCISION AND DRAINAGE

ARC NWC Theme: Methodological Innovation, Development, Adaptation & Support Theme (MIDAS)

NHS Priority Area: Hospital to Community

BACKGROUND

Pilonidal Sinus Disease is a painful inflammatory condition of the anal cleft, causing significant physical discomfort and psychosocial distress. Long recovery periods and challenging wound care exacerbate the impact. Despite various surgical approaches, no universally accepted method exists, with practices such as post-operative wound packing remaining contentious.

AIM OF STUDY

As part of a Rapid Conversion of Evidence Summaries (RaCES) project, a clinician at East Lancashire Hospitals appraised a systematic review comparing packing versus non-packing practices after incision and drainage, with the aim of exploring improved care pathways for pilonidal sinus disease.

WHAT DID WE DO?

Using insights from the systematic review, which found no statistically significant differences in outcomes such as abscess recurrence and healing time, a service evaluation was conducted to assess the feasibility of a non-packing wound care protocol.

A new protocol was introduced for wounds ≤ 5 cm deep. Patients were advised to shower daily and apply absorbent dressing pads provided by community nursing teams. Wounds were monitored weekly, and a self-care leaflet supported patient education and independence. The three-month evaluation showed the new approach was practical and beneficial.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Patients required fewer interactions with nursing teams, saving both time and travel costs. Healing outcomes were consistent with traditional packing practices. Clinicians reported no additional challenges, and more time was available for other critical tasks.

The evaluation showed an estimated £114,000 saved in clinical staff time over three months, based on 1,140 fewer clinical hours spent packing wounds for 19 patients. This translates to a potential annual saving of more than £500,000 for this service.

WHAT NEXT?

Encouraged by the pilot, a broader evaluation and rollout of the protocol and standard operating procedure are planned across Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust. This aims to replicate the positive impact and drive further improvements in patient care and NHS efficiency.

REFERENCE

More details can be found at: https://clon.uclan.ac.uk/50873/3/Packing%20vs%20non-packing_JHedit_14.11.pdf

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