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ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF NURSES-TECHNICIANS ON THE MODERN TREATMENT OF CHRONIC WOUNDS

STAVOVI I MIŠLJENJA MEDICINSKIH SESTARA-TEHNIČARA O SAVREMENOM TRETMANU HRONIČNIH RANA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The presence of wounds represents a significant burden in terms of economic costs for healthcare and social welfare providers, as well as in its impact on patients' quality of life. In Europe, increasing decentralization of healthcare and social services means that most of the burden lies within the community, where nurses and other healthcare and social care providers are responsible for wound care.

Research Objectives: To assess the attitudes and opinions of nurses and medical technicians regarding the healthcare of chronic wounds in relation to their years of service, level of education, and level of healthcare in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Methodology: The study included 699 nurses and medical technicians from across Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering all levels of healthcare. A survey questionnaire was used as the research instrument. Distribution was carried out through recommendations by nurses and medical technicians. The research was conducted in cooperation with the Chambers and Associations of Nurses and Medical Technicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study was conducted between November 24, 2021, and February 24, 2022.

Results: Overall, 90.4% of respondents had a satisfactory and positive attitude toward modern chronic wound treatment. The length of work experience did not significantly affect the respondents' attitude toward modern wound care ($\chi^2=8.523$; $p=0.202$), although there was a trend toward a more positive attitude with increasing years of experience. A significant difference was observed in the distribution of respondents based on educational level, with those holding a university degree (VSS) showing the highest proportion of

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satisfactory and positive attitudes (Chi-square=19.74; $p<0.001$). No significant difference was observed in the distribution of respondents across different levels of healthcare in terms of their attitudes toward modern chronic wound care (Chi-square=4.676; $p=0.322$).

Conclusion: The opinions and attitudes of nurses and medical technicians toward modern methods of chronic wound treatment are positive.

Keywords: chronic wounds, attitude, nurses

SAŽETAK

Uvod: Prisutnost rane predstavlja značajan teret u smislu ekonomskih troškova za pružatelje zdravstvene i socijalne zaštite i utjecaja na kvalitetu života pacijenata. U Evropi, sve veća decentralizacija zdravstvene i socijalne zaštite znači da većina tereta leži unutar zajednice u kojoj su medicinske sestre i drugi pružatelji zdravstvene i socijalne zaštite odgovorni za zbrinjavanje rana.

Ciljevi istraživanja: Procijeniti stavove i mišljenja medicinskih sestara-tehničara o zdravstvenoj njezi hronične rane u odnosu na dužinu staža, stručnu spremu i nivo zdravstvene zaštite u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Metodologija: U istraživanje je uključeno 699 medicinskih sestara-tehničara sa teritorije Bosne i Hercegovine iz svih nivoa zdravstvene zaštite, a kao instrument istraživanja koristio se anketni upitnik. Distribucija se vršila preporukom medicinskih sestara – tehničara. Istraživanje je provedeno u saradnji sa Komorama Medicinskih sestara-tehničara i Udruženja medicinskih sestara-tehničara u BIH. Istraživanje je provedeno u periodu od 24.11.2021. do 24.02.2022. godine.

Rezultati: Ukupno promatrano zadovoljavajući i pozitivan stav prema savremenom tretmanu hroničnih rana je imalo 90,4% ispitanika. Dužina radnog staža nije značajno utjecala na promjenu stave ispitanika prema savremenom tretmanu hroničnih rana (Chi kvadrat=8,523; $p=0,202$), s tim da je povećanjem godina staža bilo pomaka ka pozitivnijem stavu. U odnosu na stručnu spremu uočena je značajna razlika u distribuciji ispitanika na osnovu analize stava prema savremenom tretmanu hroničnih rana, pri čemu ispitanici sa VSS imaju najveći udio zadovoljavajućeg i pozitivnog stava (Chi kvadrat=19,74; $p<0,001$). Nije uočena značajna razlika u distribuciji ispitanika po nivou zdravstvene zaštite u odnosu na klasifikaciju stava prema savremenom tretmanu hroničnih rana (Chi kvadrat= 4,676; $p=0,322$).

Zaključak: Mišljenje i stav medicinskih sestara tehničara prema savremenom načinu tretmana hroničnih rana je pozitivan.

Ključne riječi: hronične rane, stav, medicinske sestre

INTRODUCTION

The process of wound healing is complex. When wound healing does not progress normally, it can result in a chronic wound, which is a significant burden for both the patient and the medical system. Even simple wounds resulting from minor procedures, such as outpatient surgeries, require proper attention and care, and it is understandable that patients may be concerned about potential resulting scars. Therefore, it is not surprising that wound healing receives considerable attention from both fundamental science and business perspectives, as well as patient satisfaction (Blume and Wu, 2018).

Epidemiological analyses in routine chronic wound care are rare, and published studies show significant variations. It is estimated that chronic wounds affect 1–2% of the global population. In the United States, chronic wounds are reported to affect 6.5 million patients, with the healthcare system spending over 25 billion USD annually on treating wound-related complications (Sen et al., 2009). Prevalence studies in the United Kingdom and Denmark indicate that approximately three to four individuals per 1,000 have one or more wounds. Many of these wounds become chronic, with studies showing that around 15% remain unresolved a year after onset, often leading to a prolonged yet preventable burden on patients, their families, and healthcare systems.

It is estimated that in a population of one million people, around 3,500 individuals will have a wound, with 525 of them living with a wound for more than one year (Lindholm & Searle, 2016). Globally, the incidence rate of diabetic foot ulcers is 1–4%, while the prevalence rate ranges from 5.3% to 10.5% (Rahim et al., 2017). The prevalence of pressure ulcers remains unacceptably high, ranging from 1.1% to 26.7% in hospital settings and 6% to 29% in other care environments (Graves & Zheng, 2014). The incidence of pressure ulcers is higher in intensive care units due to various factors (Wei et al., 2020).

Traditionally, wound healing has been part of fundamental nursing practices, including wound coverage, therapeutic nutrition, mobility, and psychosocial support. Nurses play a key role in managing both acute and chronic wounds. The Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society (WOCN) is the oldest nursing organization specializing in wound care and has certified over 6,000 nurses worldwide. It is considered the gold standard for wound care certification, requiring the completion of a rigorous curriculum followed by strict recertification processes. In 2010, the Organization of Wound Care Nurses (OWCN) was established to provide basic and free training for all licensed nurses practicing in various healthcare institutions.

Nursing education programs for wound and stoma care are becoming increasingly available in an effort to improve the quality of nursing care. The appropriate professional use of multiple disciplines in wound care can significantly impact treatment outcomes. Physical therapy is one such important discipline. Trained physical therapists can apply various treatment modalities, such as wound debridement, therapeutic modalities, edema management, positioning, orthotic use, and mobility improvement. Occupational therapists can provide edema treatment, wound debridement, positioning, toileting programs, self-feeding assistance, and wheelchair management based on patient needs. Addressing supportive interventions such as physical and occupational therapy, along with nutritional management, is likely to accelerate

wound healing, thereby reducing overall wound care costs. Ultimately, the longer the healing process, the higher the costs for healthcare facilities (Sen, 2019). Wound, ostomy, and continence nurses, in addition to being trained in providing acute and rehabilitative care, represent a crucial component of the wound care ecosystem.

The presence of wounds represents a significant burden in terms of economic costs for health and social care providers and impacts patients' quality of life. In Europe, increasing decentralization of health and social care means that the majority of the burden falls within the community, where nurses and other health and social care providers are responsible for wound management (AHRQ Safety Program for Nursing Homes).

Research objectives

1. To examine the opinions and attitudes of nurses-technicians regarding the healthcare of chronic wounds in relation to years of work experience.
2. To examine the opinions and attitudes of nurses-technicians regarding the healthcare of chronic wounds in relation to educational qualifications.
3. To examine the opinions and attitudes of nurses-technicians regarding the healthcare of chronic wounds in relation to the level of healthcare provision.

1. METHODOLOGY

The study represents a quantitative, cross-sectional, observational-analytical, and comparative study. The results are part of a large study on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses-technicians regarding the healthcare of chronic wounds. It included 699 nurses from Bosnia and Herzegovina across all levels of healthcare, with sampling conducted using the "snowball" method. Distribution was carried out with the recommendation of nurses. The study was conducted in collaboration with the Nurses' Chambers and the Association of Nurses in BiH. The research period was from November 24, 2021, to February 24, 2022. C A questionnaire was used for the study, developed based on a review of available professional and scientific literature on chronic wounds.

The questionnaire was adapted and modified according to the recommendations of the European Wound Management Association (EWMA) and the Croatian Wound Management Society (HUR), enabling the assessment of nurses' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding chronic wounds. Some questions were taken from the Quality of Life with Chronic Wounds (Wound-QoL Questionnaire), Wound Care Survey, and relevant scientific literature (9-16). The questionnaire consisted of 64 questions, with 13 questions specifically addressing nurses' attitudes towards chronic wounds. Consent was obtained from the registered Chambers and Associations of Nurses in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After obtaining consent, participants received a letter of intent informing them about the purpose and goals of the study. Confidentiality of the information collected was emphasized, and it was assured that the data would be used solely for research purposes. Participants willing to voluntarily participate completed the questionnaire to provide their responses and confirm their consent. The

questionnaire was distributed via an official request from the registered Chambers and Associations of Nurses in Bosnia and Herzegovina and was in the form of a Google Form. After the study was completed, the collected data were entered into an electronic database created in Microsoft Office Excel 365. Statistical analysis of the data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.00 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, New York).

2. RESULTS

Table 1. Analysis of responses to questions assessing participants' attitudes

According to your opinion	Description	N	%
Moist wound therapy is the gold standard for managing chronic wounds	Yes	268	38,3
	Unsure	284	40,6
	No	147	21,0
Compression dressings are the gold standard in treating venous ulcers	Yes	287	41,1
	Unsure	256	36,6
	No	156	22,3
Measuring the length, width, and depth of a wound should be part of the wound assessment documentation	Yes	587	84,0
	Unsure	68	9,7
	No	44	6,3
Patients with chronic wounds are burdened by	Loss of function	72	10,3
	Recurrent wounds	16	2,3
	Associated comorbidities	77	11,0
	None of the above	18	2,6
	All of the above	516	73,8
Patients with impaired sensation in the lower extremities, as seen in diabetic neuropathy, are at increased risk of foot wounds	Yes	657	94,0
	Unsure	28	4,0
	No	14	2,0
I feel confident in my ability to apply or change the following types of ostomy skin barriers and bags (Colostomy, Ileostomy, Urostomy)	Yes	390	55,8
	Sometimes	187	26,8
	No	122	17,5
Chronic wounds should be treated exclusively by a doctor	Yes	128	18,3
	Partially	368	52,6
	No	203	29,0
Treating chronic wounds requires a team or individual approach	Individual	44	6,3
	Team	655	93,7
Alternative methods in wound treatment are desirable	Yes	301	43,1
	No	398	56,9
Chronic wounds can be stopped and healed	Yes	318	45,5
	Partially	356	50,9

	No	25	3,6
Additional professional education in the field of chronic wounds is needed	Yes	533	76,3
	Unsure	93	13,3
	No	73	10,4
The quality of life in patients with chronic wounds is impaired	Yes	567	81,1
	Partially	122	17,5
	No	10	1,4
Chronic wounds limit patients' daily activities	Yes	586	83,8
	Partially	106	15,2
	No	7	1,0

Source: Personal creation based on collected data

Moist wound therapy is known as the gold standard for managing chronic wounds by 268 (38.3%) of respondents, while 287 (41.1%) consider compression dressings to be the gold standard for treating venous ulcers. Measuring the length, width, and depth of a wound as part of the documentation is deemed essential by 587 (84.0%) of respondents. 516 (73.8%) believe that patients with chronic wounds are burdened by loss of function, recurrent wounds, and associated comorbidities. Additionally, 657 (94.0%) consider that patients with impaired sensation in the lower extremities are at increased risk for foot wounds. Only 390 (55.8%) respondents feel confident in their professional ability to apply or change ostomy bags. The majority, 655 (93.7%), believe that treating chronic wounds requires a team approach. Alternative methods in wound treatment are considered desirable by 43.1% of respondents, while 318 (45.5%) think that chronic wounds can be stopped and healed. Furthermore, 533 (76.3%) respondents feel the need for additional professional education in the field of chronic wounds. The quality of life for patients with chronic wounds is considered impaired by 81.1% of respondents, and 586 (83.8%) believe that chronic wounds limit patients' daily activities.

Table 2. Classification of attitudes by years of service

Years of service	Negative attitude		Satisfactory attitude		Positive attitude		x ²	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
0-10 years	37	16,7	122	55,0	63	28,4	8,523	0,202
11-20 years	17	9,6	99	55,6	62	34,8		
21-30 years	27	11,9	120	53,1	79	35,0		
More than 30 years	7	9,6	36	49,3	30	41,1		

Source: Personal creation based on collected data

Regarding years of service, 16.7% of respondents with up to 10 years of experience had a negative attitude. In the same group, 55% of respondents had a satisfactory attitude, while 28.4% had a completely positive attitude towards chronic wound treatment. Overall, 83.4% of respondents in this group had either a satisfactory or positive attitude.

In the group with 11 to 20 years of experience, 90.4% of respondents had either a satisfactory or positive attitude. Among those with 21 to 30 years of experience, 35% had a positive attitude, and 88.1% had a satisfactory or positive attitude in total. In the group with more than 30 years of experience, 41.1% of respondents had a positive attitude, and 90.4% had either a satisfactory or positive attitude overall. There was no significant difference in the distribution of attitudes based on years of service (Chi-square = 8.523; $p = 0.202$).

Table 3. Classification of attitudes by education level

Education level	Negative attitude		Satisfactory attitude		Positive attitude		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
SE	66	16,0	225	54,5	122	29,5	19,74	<0,001
VSE	5	11,6	28	65,1	10	23,3		
University	17	7,0	124	51,0	102	42,0		

Source: Personal creation based on collected data

Regarding education level, 16% of respondents with a high school education (SE) had a negative attitude, 54.5% had a satisfactory attitude, and 29.5% had a completely positive attitude towards chronic wound treatment. In total, 84.0% of respondents with a high school education had either a satisfactory or positive attitude.

Among respondents with a college education (VSE), 11.6% had a negative attitude, 65.1% had a satisfactory attitude, and 23.3% had a positive attitude. Overall, 88.4% of respondents with a college education had either a satisfactory or positive attitude.

In the group with a university education, 7% of respondents had a negative attitude, 51% had a satisfactory attitude, and 42% had a completely positive attitude. In total, 93.0% of respondents with a university education had either a satisfactory or positive attitude. A significant difference in the distribution of attitudes based on education level was observed, with those holding a university degree showing the highest proportion of satisfactory and positive attitudes (Chi-square = 19.74; $p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Classification of attitudes by level of healthcare

Healthcare level	Negative attitude		Satisfactory attitude		Positive attitude		χ^2	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
PHC	30	12,1	130	52,4	88	35,5	4,676	0,322
SHC	29	16,4	97	54,8	51	28,8		
THC	29	10,6	150	54,7	95	34,7		

Source: Personal creation based on collected data

Regarding the level of healthcare, it was found that 12.1% of respondents from primary healthcare (PHC) had a negative attitude, while 52.4% had a satisfactory attitude, and 35.5% had a positive attitude. In total, 87.9% of respondents in PHC had either a satisfactory or positive attitude. At the secondary healthcare (SHC) level, 16.4% of respondents had a negative attitude, 54.8% had a satisfactory attitude, and 28.8% had a positive attitude. Overall, 83.6% of respondents in SHC had either a satisfactory or positive attitude. Among respondents at the tertiary healthcare (THC) level, 10.6% had a negative attitude, 54.7% had a satisfactory attitude, and 34.7% had a positive attitude. In total, 89.4% of respondents in THC had either a satisfactory or positive attitude. No significant difference was observed in the distribution of attitudes based on the level of healthcare (Chi-square = 4.676; $p = 0.322$).

3. DISCUSSION

Wound care is a constant topic for nurses and technicians worldwide, but modern wound care training programs in transition countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, are largely unavailable (King et al., 2024). Existing evidence highlights the crucial role of nurses' attitudes and opinions in shaping the quality of patient care (Foodani et al., 2024). Nurses should have knowledge of inflammation and infection control, basic moisture management, recognize the need for debridement in healing wounds, and maintain an open attitude toward modern methods of treating chronic wounds (Rajhathay et al., 2024).

The attitude of healthcare professionals is a crucial quality reflecting individual beliefs and helps to understand how issues or processes are perceived in clinical care and decision-making regarding what is appropriate for patient health and well-being (Gillespie, Chaboyer, Allen, Morley and Nieuwenhoven, 2013). The attitudes and beliefs of healthcare workers are often underestimated and underexplored areas in the practice of wound care and prevention. Given that resources are scarce both emotionally and financially, all these factors must compete with other healthcare issues. Additionally, healthcare workers who are not particularly interested in the prevention and treatment of chronic wounds tend to view it in a simplified manner, which negatively impacts patient care. Research-based evidence supports these claims. Therefore, it is in everyone's interest to put more effort into explaining the human context in which wound care is performed (Price, 2015).

The analysis of respondents' attitudes in this study provides several insights into the management of chronic wounds. A significant portion of respondents (38.3%) recognizes moist wound therapy as the gold standard for managing chronic wounds. Similarly, 41.1% believe that compression therapy is the gold standard for treating venous ulcers. The necessity of measuring wound dimensions (length, width, and depth) as part of documentation is acknowledged by 84.0% of respondents. Regarding the burden on patients, 73.8% of respondents agree that patients with chronic wounds are affected by loss of function, recurrent wounds, and associated comorbidities. Additionally, 94% of respondents consider patients with impaired sensation in the lower extremities to be at increased risk for foot wounds. Despite this awareness, only 55.8% of respondents feel confident in their ability to apply or change ostomy pouches.

The majority of respondents (93.7%) support the idea that treating chronic wounds should be a team approach. However, 43.1% of respondents believe that alternative methods in wound treatment are desirable, while 45.5% think that chronic wounds can be stopped and healed. Furthermore, 76.3% of respondents feel that additional professional education in chronic wound care is necessary. The impact of chronic wounds on patients' quality of life is recognized by 81.1% of respondents, and 83.8% agree that chronic wounds limit patients' daily activities. In the study by Obilar, Omolara, Ani (2021), 48.9% (n=89) of nurses had a negative attitude, while 51.1% (n=93) had a positive attitude towards wound assessment. Additionally, more than half of the participants (n=98, 53.8%) agreed that wound assessment is the exclusive responsibility of doctors rather than nurses. In this study, the length of work experience was directly correlated with the attitude score, with participants having more extended experience showing a somewhat better attitude. Analysis of the factors indicated that only the level of professional education significantly influenced the attitude score. In a Belgian study, nurses' attitudes towards pressure ulcers were significantly correlated with the application of adequate prevention, whereas this study did not find a correlation between knowledge and the application of adequate prevention (Goudy-Egger and Dunn, 2018).

Analysis of attitudes in relation to professional education in this study revealed significant differences in the distribution of participants based on attitude analysis. These results are similar to those reported by Dilie and Mengistu, where it was noted that nurses with intermediate professional education had a positive attitude towards wound assessment and wound care in general (Mayor, 2009). Additionally, in relation to the length of work experience, no significant difference in the distribution of participants based on attitude analysis was found ($p=0.202$). In the study by Dugdall et al., nurses who spent a significant portion of their work time in chronic wound treatment had a better attitude and greater knowledge, which is not in line with the results of this study (Dugdall and Watson, 2009). This study did not find a significant difference in the distribution of participants based on the level of healthcare in relation to their attitude.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, we reached the following conclusions:

1. The overall attitudes of the participants were assessed as satisfactory.
2. The majority of respondents (93.7%) believe that a team approach is necessary for the treatment of chronic wounds.
3. A total of 76.3% of respondents feel that they need additional professional education in the field of chronic wounds.
4. The length of work experience influenced a positive attitude toward the diagnosis and treatment of chronic wounds.
5. A significant difference in attitude distribution was observed based on the level of education, with those holding a university degree showing the highest proportion of satisfactory and positive attitudes.

6. The level of healthcare did not influence attitudes toward the diagnosis and treatment of chronic wounds.

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