

## **STATE OF THE SCIENCE: CONSENSUS STATEMENTS FOR THE PREVENTION, PREDICTION, ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SKIN TEARS**

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**Brief Description of Research or Project:** There has historically been limited interest in skin tears, as demonstrated in the paucity of quality publications addressing these wounds. A structured review from 1990-2013 yielded only 75 publications. In an effort to redirect awareness toward this largely unheeded healthcare issue, an international Skin Tears Advisory Panel (ISTAP) consisting of internationally recognized key opinion leaders was established. This resulted in the development and publication of a skin tear definition and key consensus statements on the prevention, prediction, assessment. The consensus statements and the proposed definition were subjected to a three-phase Delphi process and obtained a 99% agreement rate. **Why is this research important to profile at the Research Day 2014?** Approximately 1.5 million skin tears occur each year in institutionalized adults in the United States. A 1994 study in a 347-bed facility in Western Australia demonstrated a 41.5% skin tear prevalence rate within its population. Studies of patients in community settings have reported skin tear prevalence rates of 5.5% in known wounds amongst all age groups<sup>8</sup>, and 20% of known wounds in the veteran population. Some researchers hypothesize that skin tears are more prevalent in the elderly population than pressure ulcers. Skin tears tend to occur in individuals at the extremes of age, the critically ill, the medically compromised, and/or those requiring assistance with personal care. Although elderly and neonatal populations are at the highest risk for skin tears, it is imperative that all patients be assessed for the risk of developing a skin tear. <sup>1,6</sup> The prevalence and incidence of skin tears in Canada's elderly population has not been reported in the literature. The prevalence of skin tears; particularly in the long-term care setting closely resembles that of pressure ulcers, yet frequently these wounds are not afforded the attention they require and are often not distinguished as unique wounds. In 2011 an international consensus conference was held and a document produced that focused on current knowledge and evidence focusing on the epidemiology, etiology, pathophysiology, assessment, prevention, treatment and documentation of skin tears. This presentation will discuss the consensus statements and future research.