

Victorian Community Wounds Study

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Chronic wounds, or wounds that are slow to heal, have significant impacts on people who experience them and on their communities. People with these wounds often endure pain, reduced mobility, higher risk of infections and significant financial burden. This burden also affects the broader community through increased costs and demands on available health care services. As the population ages in Victoria and diseases such as diabetes, which can slow down wound healing, increase, it is important to consider what services may be required and how to provide them. To do this, we need to know the size of the problem. It is thought that about one per cent of people have wounds that are slow or difficult to heal and this rate increases as people get older. Other work suggests that this rate may be an underestimate of what is actually happening in the community. The aim of this project is to obtain reliable information on the incidence and prevalence of chronic wounds in the community in Victoria.

This research is being conducted by researchers from Monash University, funded by the Department of Human Services. There are two arms of the project to gather information that will give an understanding of the problems and issues of chronic wounds for all Victorians rather than small groups of people.

The main element of the project is called the Shepparton Entire Population Sample, in which information on all people over 18 years of age with chronic wounds in the specific postcodes of 3630 and 3629 will be sought. To connect to all people with wounds of interest a range of marketing and other strategies will be used. Once the number of wounds is known, this can be compared to the whole population to understand the size of the problem. Once identified, people with wounds will be interviewed to collect information on the range of factors that may affect wound healing such as age, gender, cultural background, diet, health service use and any other factors that may be considered relevant.

The second element is designed to complement the first and is called the Whole of Victoria Selected Population Sample. In this arm of the project, a random sample of people over the age of 65 will be generated from the electoral roll and sent a personalised letter asking if they have a wound that fits the study criteria. This study will allow the researchers to collect data from people in metropolitan and rural areas to see if the results differ from those in Shepparton to help make the results more broad in their usefulness.

The outcomes of this study will provide information on how many people experience chronic wounds and some of the factors that put people at risk or have an impact on costs and services. These results will help with planning for delivery of services in the future to meet the needs of a changing population.