Repeat Acute Burns Presentations Amongst Patients Within A Single Institution

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Background

- Most individuals that present to a Burns Unit for management of an acute burn are doing so for the first time in response to a single isolated event
- Once treatment is completed they will likely never again present for management of an acute burn
- A small percentage of patients however re-present with new acute burns for a number of reasons

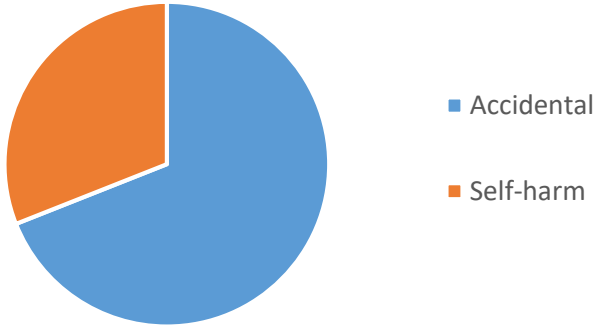
Aims

- Examine the incidence and aetiology of repeat burns to the Royal North Shore Hospital Severe Burns Unit between January 2013 and January 2017

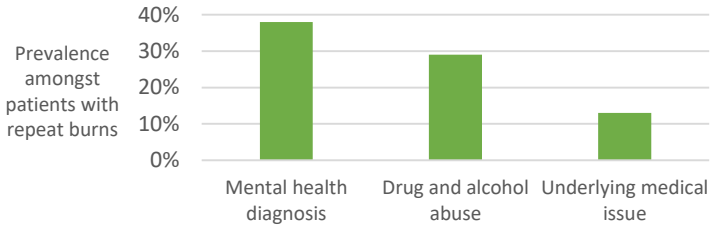
Results

- 3066 patients were managed for acute burns during this period
- 32 patients (1%) re-presented on one or more occasion with another acute burn
- 92 burns were treated amongst this group at a range of 2 to 16 burns per patient
- Average total body surface area (TBSA) for these burns was 1.5% (range 0.1 – 8.0% TBSA)
- 69% of repeat burns were accidental
- 31% of repeat burns were from self-harm

Repeat acute burns presentations



Risk factors for repeat presentations



- 38% of patients presenting with repeat burns had a significant mental health diagnosis. Conditions included borderline personality, bipolar, schizoaffective disorder, schizophrenia, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety.
- 29% had a concurrent drug and alcohol problem
- 13% had an underlying medical condition predisposing them to the burn. Conditions included poor eyesight, spinal cord injury and epilepsy.

- 2 patients presented 3 times in total. Both were paraplegics who sustained a mixture of scald and flame burns.
- 6 patients presented 4+ times in total. All patients in this group were self-harming. Mechanisms included a mixture of flame burns from lighters, and chemical burns from a variety of caustic liquids.

Conclusion

- Repeat burns presentations are a rare occurrence
- Most repeat presentations are from accidental injury, however mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and underlying medical conditions are important contributors to repeat burn data