

Stacey – A girl who had major burns

The causes of burns are many and varied, being caused by heat from hot liquids, flame, or contact with heated objects, electrical current or chemicals. A major burn is one covering 25% or more of the total body surface. With increasing survival from serious burns and increasing expectations of the quality of survival, burn aftercare rehabilitation programmes have assumed an increasingly important role. Scarring is a major cause of long-term functional and cosmetic deformities seen in burns patients. Similarly, psychological difficulties can occur at any stage following a burn injury.

Stacey is a 14-year-old girl who was recently discharged from hospital after a long and protracted stay relating to a major burn she sustained to her head, neck and shoulder. Stacey was burned by a gas explosion when camping, which resulted in the right side of her head and neck receiving a deep-partial thickness burn. Her right shoulder also incurred a partial thickness burn. Stacey's stay in hospital was complicated by a systemic infection, so she had to stay an extra 2 weeks to receive intravenous antibiotics. While in hospital, Stacey sees the psychologist two times per week and the physiotherapist five times a week.

Upon discharge, the GP notes that Stacey is increasingly negative about her position and this is affecting her ability to conduct her self-rehabilitation routines. Stacey's ongoing rehabilitation with the burns service is insufficient for her needs and she requires additional services. Stacey has been under a Chronic Disease Management plan and she has utilised the five allocated Medicare rebate services for the year. Her family finds it very difficult to pay gap payments for the allied health services and states they cannot fund the further allied health treatment that Stacey would benefit from.

The Be Inspired Foundation is contacted to help out with Stacey's case. The GP requests that she be able to access psychology and exercise physiology services.

The Be Inspired Foundation, with appropriate funding, would be able to help Stacey by providing her sponsorship to receive the following:

Psychology services

- *Interventions*
 - *Monitor for common psychosocial complications of burns, for example post-traumatic stress disorder, decreased function, changing roles, return to work or school, and sexual and body image issues*
 - *Manage these complications as necessary*
 - *Seek out and manage ongoing feelings of depression, anger and anxiety*
 - *Encouragement to return to normal daily routines as soon as possible to re-establish their prior sense of identity*

- *Strategies to enhance coping may be used individually or in combination, including counselling, social skills training, camouflage makeup and referral to support groups*
- *These services could be provided every one or two weeks, depending on the patient's ability to access treatment*
- *Treatment would ideally be completed in a group setting to help reduce delivery costs and to increase the patient's social and support networks*

Exercise physiology services

- *Interventions*
 - *Aerobic, strength and anthropometric testing to establish a baseline of patient lung and muscle function as well as to monitor progress*
 - *Aerobic based exercise prescription (swimming, cycling and running) to help to stretch scar tissue as well as improving exercise tolerance and maintaining a positive mental state.*
 - *Stretching of affected joints their maximum functional range to ensure minimal contractures*
 - *Strength based exercises to benefit bone mineral density and muscle development, following the post-burn catabolic state and immobilisation*
 - *Encouragement to return to normal daily routines as soon as possible to re-establish their prior sense of identity*
- *These services could be provided up to 2 – 3 times per week, depending on the patient's ability to access treatment*
- *Treatment would ideally be completed in a group setting to help reduce delivery costs and to increase the patient's social and support networks*

The Be Inspired Foundation funded Stacey's care with a scholarship as coordinated by her GP and the burns service, for twelve weeks in total. The psychologist saw her eight times in total and assisted her by working through issues relating to body image and particularly the loss of her hair, cognitive strategies to assist in rehabilitation adherence and conducted a family meeting to discuss the psychosocial impacts of Stacey's burns on her. The exercise physiologist provided a structured exercise routine as well as seeing her twice a week for a total of 24 mixed aerobic/strength sessions.