Randomized controlled trial and cost-effectiveness analysis of silver-donating antimicrobial dressings for venous leg ulcers (VULCAN trial) (Br J Surg 2009; 96: 1147–1156)

Sir

The article by Michaels and colleagues includes clinical (healing) outcomes, quality-of-life measurements and health economic calculations based on a comparison of various silver-containing dressings and non-silver dressings in the treatment of venous leg ulcers. The fact that the patients were randomized to receive silver dressings in the absence of any clinical indication of topical antimicrobial therapy is contrary to best practice. The ulcers randomized to silver dressings were not reported to have been either infected or at risk of infection. As indicated for such wounds, we respectfully submit that these dressings were used contrary to the manufacturers’ instructions for use. In addition, it has been established that silver dressings differ in their characteristics of silver delivery, making generalizations about their antimicrobial efficacy unsupported. As such, the results, including all quality-of-life and health economic components, must be interpreted in light of this and are therefore of little value when used as a basis for making clinical decisions.


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