

ASSESSING PERITONEAL DIALYSIS CATHETER EXIT SITES: THE USE OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION GUIDE

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PROBLEM: The long-term success of peritoneal dialysis (PD) is dependent on maintaining infection free access to the peritoneum. Good exit site care aims to prevent infection and identify problems early. We needed a more objective method of assessing exit sites than nurses' descriptions in order to identify problems and monitor the effect of any intervention.

PURPOSE: To ascertain whether a photographic exit site classification guide would be a useful tool in assessing exit sites and for future monitoring.

DESIGN: Community PD nurses used a photographic exit site classification guide on routine home visits to describe patients' exit sites. The guide was adapted from Twardowski and Prowant's classification of normal and diseased exit sites. Our guide had 34 numbered photographs with brief descriptions.

FINDINGS: 91% (n=92) of exit sites could be classified using the photographic guide. In 7% the same photograph was used to describe slightly crusted healthy exit sites and crusted unhealthy exit sites. 9% of exit sites did not have a matching photograph. Most of these were described as over-granulated by the observing nurse.

CONCLUSION: The classification guide was easy to use but more photographs are required of over-granulated exit sites and to distinguish between crusted healthy exit sites and crusted unhealthy exit sites.

RELEVANCE: The photographic classification guide is a useful tool in assessing exit sites and could be used to monitor changes in exit sites over time. It is inexpensive compared with the use of Polaroid or digital cameras. Because the same set range of numbered photographs is used for all patients, the routine use of the guide could help in the audit of the quality of exit site care provided.