



AWMA
Australian Wound
Management Association Inc.
National

AUSTRALIAN WOUND MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION WOUND AWARENESS WEEK 2013

MEDIA RELEASE

Better access to compression therapy could save \$166M p.a.

The fifth annual Wound Awareness Week (18-22 March 2013) begins with a new report showing millions of health budget dollars and immense personal suffering would be saved through better access to compression therapy for leg ulcer patients. The report is available for download at www.awma.com.au

*For high-resolution images and audio, please visit the Multimedia News Release:
<http://medianet.multimediarelease.com.au/bundles/06888a69-fbae-46ff-bfff-7304dd070c96>*

The new national report by KPMG estimates that economic cost savings of \$166 million a year could be generated if all eligible patients with venous leg ulcers (VLU) were treated with compression bandages and stockings.

At present, the barrier to best-practice use of compression therapy is the high cost, which most Australian patients must pay for personally. As VLU patients tend to be elderly people of limited means, the majority are not receiving this recommended care.

The Australian Wound Management Association (AWMA), the peak body for nurses, doctors and allied health professionals working in the field of wound management, believes the only solution is a government subsidy scheme for compression therapy. AWMA has asked the Federal Government to consider the benefits highlighted in the report as part of this year's budgetary planning process.

The KPMG Health Economics report: *An economic evaluation of compression therapy for venous leg ulcers* estimates that appropriate compression therapy for the treatment of VLU could deliver an average \$6,328 in health care savings per patient. The costs of compression therapy for patients battling VLUs could be reduced by an average \$399 per patient per year.

"These estimated savings would flow from the faster healing times associated with compression therapy," said Australian Wound Management Association (AWMA) national president Dr Bill McGuinness.

"Compression therapy is an essential component of VLU care, with most wounds healing within the benchmark time of 12 weeks, nearly twice as quickly as otherwise. This means less use of GPs, community care and hospitals, and a greatly reduced financial burden on the public health system."



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AWMA estimates that as many as 300,000 Australians currently experience chronic wounds requiring management. As the KPMG study noted, around 42,600 people aged over 60 years have at least one VLU at any time.

KPMG's Lead Health Economist Dr. Henry Cutler said, "Compression therapy leads to better health outcomes at lower cost. Sustainable health care financing in Australia will require giving greater priority to cost-effective care, such as compression therapy for VLU."

Dr McGuiness said the clinical benefits of compression therapy are codified in guidelines across Australia, New Zealand and a range of comparable countries, while in the United Kingdom there is a government subsidy for compression stockings and bandages.

Dr McGuiness went on to state: "This support is generally not available in Australia, even though subsidies are available for helping treat other common conditions such as incontinence and diabetes."

"Managing leg ulcers is an equity issue that needs addressing urgently. The less well-off are paying the price for a health condition that causes pain and discomfort, greatly restricts their mobility and creates distress and social isolation."

"As the Australian Medical Association noted in its pre-Budget submission, we may not be in an environment for significant new health funding, but we have an urgent need for some smarter thinking on how precious health dollars are allocated and spent."

The KPMG study found that -

- The estimated average cost of treating VLU patients in 2012-13 was at least twice as high, and in some jurisdictions nearly three times higher, when compression therapy was not used compared to when compression therapy was used to treat VLU.
- Nationally, the average cost in 2012-13 for treatment of a VLU without using compression therapy was estimated at \$10,743 per patient treated, compared to an estimated \$3,883 when using compression therapy.
- The estimated average national cost in 2012-13 per VLU wound treated without compression therapy ranges from \$5,315 (NT) to \$9,712 (WA), and averages \$8,096 nationally. *The national average cost per wound treated from using compression therapy was estimated to be only \$2,926.*
- One per cent of Australians over the age of 60 years currently experience a VLU requiring treatment. A total of 42,600 Australians aged 60 and over have at least one VLU at any time.
- The use of compression therapy reduces average healing time for VLU patients to 20 weeks on average. This is *nearly half the average healing time* of 36 weeks for those treated using other means.
- VLU patients being managed with compression therapy are unlikely to require hospital admission for their wound management.
- However, 11 per cent of VLU patients not receiving compression therapy *do* require admission - at an average cost ranging from \$5,222 (NT) to \$9,380 (Tas) per hospital separation.

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