

# **Cardiac surgical wounds - Are we underestimating their impact on recovery?**

Kath Hewitt – Senior Cardiothoracic Specialist Nurse  
University Hospital South Manchester

# Introduction:

- Deep sternal wound infections (DSWI) and infections post vein harvesting are a known complication of cardiac surgery.
- UHSM runs a nurse-led wound clinic, where patients with complex wound healing problems are seen by expert cardiothoracic specialist nurses.
- It was felt that the impact of the wound on patients overall recovery, from both a physical and psychological perspective was being underestimated.
- We asked patients to complete a questionnaire on their experience of their wound to further understand their impact from a holistic perspective.

# Implications of Infection:

- Incidence of DSWI is reported as being between 0.8-3%
- Epidemiological factors associated with increased risk of DSWI include: age, obesity, diabetes and smoking.
- Patients with DSWI are at increased risk of requiring re-exploration for bleeding.
- This raises likelihood of mortality significantly.

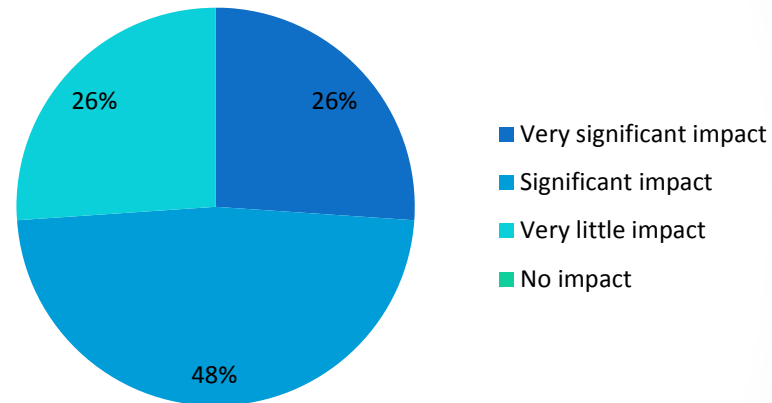


- Example of DSWI requiring re-admittance to ward post discharge.

# Results (n=26)

- 74% of patients felt their wound had a significant or very significant impact on their daily life.
- 57% felt it had delayed their overall recovery.
- 56% of patients reported feeling underprepared for the problems their wound could cause.
- 31% of respondents felt their wound had delayed their return to work.

How significant an impact do you feel your wound has on your daily life?



# Results (Cont.)

- Whilst the majority of surgical wounds are addressed in the community via district nursing – of those patients who attended the wound clinic, 100% were happy to travel to receive specialist care.
  - Median distance travelled was 16 miles.
- Interestingly, 30% of respondents reported feeling their wound would have a negative effect on their body confidence.
  - There is very little written in the literature addressing this issue.
- 91% of patients reported receiving clear instructions on wound care at home.
- 100% of patients reported being very satisfied with their care.

# Conclusions:

- We found that a significant amount of patients felt they were underprepared for the impact their wound could have.
- We are implementing changes to ensure patients in our pre-op clinics are counselled regarding the possible complications regarding their wounds.
- We are seeking to undertake a more comprehensive piece of work into the overall psychological impact of DSWI on mental health and body image.
- Thank you, any questions?