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Wound Debridement by Licensed Nurses Guidelines

I. Rationale for Guidelines

The purpose of these *Wound Debridement by Licensed Nurses Guidelines* is to protect the public health and safety by identifying the qualifications and training required for the licensed nurse performing wound debridement. The removal of devitalized tissue is imperative to the improvement of outcomes for patients requiring wound care.

II. Definitions

A. Wound Debridement is defined as the removal of devitalized tissue by one of the following mechanisms:

1. Enzymatic/chemical is the use of topical enzymatic medications for removal of necrotic tissue (Kravitz, 2007).
2. Autolytic wound debridement is the breakdown of necrotic tissue provided by the body's own white blood cells. Autolysis can be accomplished with the use of any moisture-retentive dressing (Kravitz, 2007).
3. Mechanical wound debridement is the non-selective removal of nonviable tissue and debris from the wound by wound irrigation, hydrotherapy, or wet-to-dry dressings (AH CPR, 2008). NOTE: The use of whirlpools is no longer a preferred method of mechanical wound debridement due to tissue maceration and problems with cross contamination (Kravitz, 2007).
4. Biological or larval therapy is the application of sterile larvae into the wound bed which secrete proteolytic enzymes for the rapid breakdown of necrotic tissue (Ayello, 2008).
5. Sharp wound debridement is a selective debridement method for the removal of loosely adherent, nonviable tissue, using sterile instruments.
  - a. Conservative sharp wound debridement is the removal of loose avascular tissue which is not aggressive enough to harm viable tissue and does not result in blood loss;
  - b. Aggressive sharp wound debridement is the removal of necrotic tissue and its attached bacterial burden with or without pain or bleeding (Ayello, 2008).

B. Direct supervision means the provision of wound debridement in the physical presence of a Registered Nurse or licensed physician.

### III. Qualifications and Training

- A. Qualifications: The scope of practice of a Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse may include the provision of enzymatic/chemical, autolytic, biological/larval therapy, and mechanical debridement.
1. Licensed Practical Nurses may assist with conservative sharp wound debridement only if they have advanced education and training in the wound debridement process and under the direct supervision of a Registered Nurse or physician competent in conservative sharp debridement. Licensed Practical Nurses performing Conservative Sharp Wound Debridement are restricted to use of scissors only.
  2. Conservative Sharp Wound Debridement may be provided by only those Registered Nurses with advanced preparation in the wound debridement processes (Ramundo, 2012).
  3. Aggressive Sharp Wound Debridement may only be performed by an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse with advanced preparation in the wound debridement process (Ramundo, 2012).
- B. Education:
1. Initial and continued competency shall be required of and documented for all licensed nurses performing debridement. Competency is not only a skill demonstration, but also includes assessment contributing to a nursing diagnosis with the development and application of a plan of care, evaluation and reassessment. Items to be included in the initial and continued competency requirements shall include but are not limited to:
    - a. infection control procedures;
    - b. types of debridement;
    - c. wound etiology and disease process;
    - d. complications;
    - e. terminology;
    - f. pharmacology pertaining to medications utilized in debridement;
    - g. skin and tissue anatomy and physiology (WOCN, 2003); and
    - h. skill competency validation.
- A. Provision of debridement: The licensed nurse performing wound debridement
1. ensures that an assessment of the total patient care requirements before, during and after wound debridement has been completed by a Registered Nurse, or a licensed independent practitioner;
  2. recognizes potential complications of wound debridement;
  3. intervenes based upon orders or institutional protocols prescribed by those authorized by state law to so prescribe, in the event of complications; and
  4. shall be authorized by institutional policy and procedure to provide wound debridement.

#### IV. Policy and Procedure Requirements

- A. The following information must be available to the licensed nurse in the facility in which the wound debridement occurs:
  - 1. A policy which addresses educational preparation, certification and a competency validation process for wound debridement.
  - 2. Guidelines for patient monitoring, medication administration and protocols for dealing with potential complications or emergency situations related to wound debridement developed in accordance with accepted standards.
  - 3. A policy addressing frequency of documentation and monitoring of the patient during and after wound debridement.
- B. Wound debridement shall be ordered by any person authorized by state law to so order/prescribe.
- C. Selection and intervention in wound debridement should be consistent with overall patient goals.

#### V. Regulatory Authority

Title 59 O.S. §567.3a.2, 3, 4

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