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Strictly Embargoed until 00:01 hours (BST), 8th October 2008

This alert highlights some of the key health care conclusions and their implications for practice as published next week in [The Cochrane Library](#), 2008, Issue 4.

To receive a full copy of the reviews highlighted in this newsletter, or to arrange an interview with an author, please contact Jennifer Beal on +44 (0)1243 770633 / +44 (0) 7802 468863 or by email, wnews@wiley.com.

Reviews highlighted in this newsletter:

- **[Burn Treatment Cream May Delay Healing](#)**
A cream commonly used to treat burns may actually delay healing. In addition, despite the wide range of wound dressings available for burns, there is no consensus on the most effective alternative treatment, say Cochrane Researchers who carried out a systematic review of existing data.
- **[Honey Helps To Heal Wounds](#)**
Honey may reduce healing times in patients suffering mild to moderate burn wounds. A systematic review by Cochrane Researchers concluded that honey might be useful as an alternative to traditional wound dressings in treating burns.

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Increased understanding of the wound healing process means that there are now a large number of different ways to treat burns. Films, gels, artificial skins and fibre dressings may all help to heal wounds, but doctors still often turn to traditional gauze dressings, as well as silver sulphadiazine (SSD) cream. Healthcare providers have used SSD cream since the 1960s to minimize the risk of burns becoming infected, although concerns have recently been raised about its toxic effects on skin cells.

The Cochrane Team who carried out the research found 26 relevant trials. Although each trial was relatively small they concluded that SSD cream increases the time taken for a wound to heal, as well as increasing the number of dressing applications required.

“We think that the use of SSD cream on burn wounds needs to be reconsidered,” says lead researcher, Jason Wasiak, who works for the Victorian Adult Burns Service at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, Australia.

Trials showed that a number of different dressing types, including polyurethane films, hydrocolloid gels and biosynthetic dressings, can be more effective for treatment of moderate burns than SSD or standard chlorhexidine impregnated gauze dressings. As well as reducing healing times, some alternative dressings also reduced pain associated with burns.

Many of the trials, however, failed to adequately assess the depth of burns suffered, so the data was less easy to interpret. The researchers say there is a strong case for larger and better designed trials that will help inform doctors about the most appropriate treatments for burns of different severities.

“There is a need to clearly estimate burn depth in order to make proper recommendations as to the best products for treating burns,” says Wasiak.

Wasiak J, Cleland H, Campbell F. Dressings for superficial and partial thickness burns. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD002106. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD002106.pub3.

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Honey Helps To Heal Wounds

Honey may reduce healing times in patients suffering mild to moderate burn wounds. A systematic review by Cochrane Researchers concluded that honey might be useful as an alternative to traditional wound dressings in treating burns.

“We’re treating these results with caution, but it looks like honey can help speed up healing in some burns,” says lead researcher Dr Andrew Jull, of the Clinical Trials Research Unit at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Honey has been used in wound treatment since ancient times. The mechanism of action is unclear. While honey may help the body remove dead tissue and provide a favourable environment for the growth of new, healthy tissue, current interest in medicinal honey focuses largely on its antibacterial effects.

The review brings together data from 19 clinical trials involving 2554 patients with a range of different wounds. Honey was more effective in reducing healing time compared to some gauze and film dressings that are often used to treat moderate burns. However, the researchers were unable to show any clear benefits for the healing of grazes, lacerations, surgical wounds and leg ulcers.

The researchers don’t advise using honey to treat other types of wounds. “Health services should invest in treatments that have been shown to work,” says Dr Jull. “But, we will keep monitoring new research to try and establish the effect of honey.”

Jull AB, Rodgers A, Walker N. Honey as a topical treatment for wounds. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD005083. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD005083.pub2.

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Notes for editors

1. The Cochrane Library contains high quality health care information, including Systematic Reviews from The Cochrane Collaboration. These Reviews bring together research on the effects of health care and are considered the gold standard for determining the relative effectiveness of different interventions. The Cochrane Collaboration (<http://www.cochrane.org>) is a UK registered international charity and the world's leading producer of systematic Reviews. It has been demonstrated that Cochrane Systematic Reviews are of comparable or better quality and are updated more often than the Reviews published in print journals^a.
2. The Cochrane Library can be accessed at <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>. Guest users may access abstracts for all Reviews in the database, and members of the media may request full access to the contents of the Library. For further information, see contact details below.

A number of countries have national provisions by which some or all of their residents are able to access The Cochrane Library for free. These include:

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Northern Ireland	http://www.thecochranelibrary.com
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The Canadian Province of Saskatchewan	http://www.thecochranelibrary.com
The Canadian Province of Nova Scotia	http://www.library.dal.ca/kellogg/ahkp/cochrane.htm
The US State of Wyoming	http://wyld.state.wy.us/dbloginform.html

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There are also several programmes, such as the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) that provide access in developing countries. To find out whether your country is included in any of these programmes/provisions, or to learn how to get access if you don't already have it, please visit: <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>.

4. The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews received its first Impact Factor ever in 2007 and has an IF of 4.654, giving it a ranking of 14 out of 100 in the ISI category Medicine, General & Internal.
5. As of Issue 4 2008, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews will include Systematic Reviews of Diagnostic Test Accuracy. Diagnostic test accuracy reviews are full-text systematic reviews of studies that assess the accuracy of a diagnostic test or tests for a given target condition in a specific patient/participant group and setting.
6. A new feature from The Cochrane Library for 2008: a collection of podcasts on a selection of Cochrane Reviews by the authors will be available from <http://www.cochrane.org/podcasts> from Wednesday 8th October 2008.
For Issue 4, 2008, the podcasts are:
 - o **St John's wort for major depression**

- Mouthrinses for the treatment of halitosis
- Procaine treatments for cognition and dementia
- Acupuncture and assisted conception
- Rehabilitation after lumbar disc surgery
- Mupirocin ointment for preventing Staphylococcus aureus infections in nasal carriers
- Organising health care services for persons with an intellectual disability
- Hospital at home versus in-patient hospital care
- Platinum versus non-platinum chemotherapy regimens for small cell lung cancer
- Increased police patrols for preventing alcohol-impaired driving
- Regular treatment with formoterol for chronic asthma: serious adverse events

If you would like to see a full list of Reviews published in the new issue of The Cochrane Library, or would like to request full access to the contents of The Cochrane Library, please contact:

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^a Jadad AR, Cook DJ, Jones A, Klassen TP, Tugwell P, Moher M, et al. Methodology and reports of systematic Reviews and meta-analyses: a comparison of Cochrane Reviews with articles published in paper-based journal.