

I would like to say a HUGE thank you for the opportunity to go to ANZBA in Brisbane this year! I would not have been able to get there without your kind support.

The theme for ANZBA 2018 was “Scar Wars” - a focus on scar management which I knew would be very useful!

I am an Occupational Therapist working in the role of Burns and Scar Management in The Wellington Regional Plastic, Maxillofacial and Burns Unit at the Hutt Hospital. As I am the only Scar Therapist in the Wellington region in this very specialist area, the nearest others being in Palmerston Nth and Nelson, I really appreciate the opportunity to participate in burns education and contact with peers.

The ANZBA Conference offered a range of opportunities to listen to experts from around the world in quick fire or more in-depth lectures. Companies providing scar related products were set up to offer information and samples and some offered seminars outside the conference hours to educate participants regarding their products and what they can offer. There were great opportunities within and outside conference hours to network and chat to others working with burns survivors from other parts of New Zealand and Australia.

There were many instances where I learnt something that I knew I could take back to my workplace that would impact on my treatment efficacy and possibly patient outcomes. I like to mention a few of these.

The Allied Health Forum that took place the morning before the conference officially commenced was very interesting. Professor Cecilia Li from Hong Kong presented about non-invasive scar treatments such as pressure therapy, silicone and inserts. This was a great reminder to consider the differing pressure across a pressure garment and the need for inserts on some occasions to ensure pressure was optimal. Peter Moortgat from Belgium spoke about the use of Massage, Shockwave therapy, Micro needling, taping and exercise. His taping technique to take tension off scars was thought provoking and has made me think about the effects of tension on the skin when dealing with linear scars since my return. The benefits of massage in scar management is well known however Peter offered detail regarding how this is effective and the higher tech ways we can provide this.

I tend to prescribe one brand of pressure garments for my burns and scar management patients as I am familiar with these and wasn't really aware of the benefits of other brands. I attended a presentation by an alternative supplier one evening and learnt about the unique characteristics this product offered. I was able to make contact with this company's rep and plan to investigate how I can offer this to burns survivors when clinically indicated.

The use of silicone products in sheet and gel form is very common in the management of scar and I was keen to talk to the representatives from companies that offer silicone products with practical applications. Silicone that can stay on the skin for several days in an active lifestyle, offer UV protection

or have a built in foam padding will be very useful for some people. I really value the idea of having many “tools in the tool box” when considering what will meet the individual needs of those I’m treating.

I got the chance to meet Michael Serghious and Jonathan Niszczak, OTs from USA who presented regarding face and neck scar management. This is a complex area of scar management post burns that I was keen to upskill in so it was inspiring to hear about the methods they use and teach. These guys offer teaching opportunities in this area so that will be something to take up when offered in Australasia.

I attended every talk and meeting on offer and it was great to soak up the information and discussion on topics that are outside my scope of practice but offer valuable background and information about the management of burns in general. Debate about the efficacy of different treatment modalities and protocols was really interesting.

Spending time with other OTs working in burns was hugely valuable as I often feel a bit isolated working on my own. We work in different DHBs with different systems and ways of working so it’s great to compare and share ideas and treatment methods. I have returned with information including alternative outcome measures, the provision of interim off-the-shelf garments and pressure garment fitting tips that I will be putting into action in my practice.

Again, thank you for the chance to attend ANZBA. I really made the most of being there – learnt a lot and heard presentations that confirmed that my practice is sound and I am doing the right things for the burns survivors that I see.

Kindest regards,
Tracy Johns