

Clinical Psychology on the Burns Unit

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Introduction

The National Burn Care Standards for the UK recommend that all burns centres/units across the country are able to provide psychological support to individuals who have had a burn injury, as part of their care if required.

This leaflet tells you about the clinical psychology service on the burns inpatient unit at Whiston Hospital.

Dr Leila Eccles, Consultant Clinical Psychologist is the Clinical and Professional Service Lead for the hospital. She can be contacted on:

01744 646 864

**at the Clinical Psychology Department,
St Helens Hospital.**

How can I get to talk to the clinical psychologist?

Whilst you are on the ward if you feel that you would like to talk to the clinical psychologist you can tell a member of the burns unit team who will pass the message on.

The psychologist will then come and visit you on the ward.

Following your discharge from the inpatient unit you will probably come back to the hospital to go to the dressing clinic or the scar clinic.

If you have been worried about how you are coping at home following your burn injury you can talk about this in the dressings or scar clinic.

The doctors, nurses or physiotherapists can then make a referral to clinical psychology on your behalf.

You will then be sent an outpatient appointment to come and see the clinical psychologist at the hospital who can provide on-going psychological support.

If you were seeing the psychologist regularly on the ward when you were an inpatient, an outpatient appointment will be arranged with you before you are discharged if you require on-going psychological support.

Why does the burns unit have a clinical psychologist?

A burn injury more often than not impacts on an individual physically.

It can also have a psychological and emotional impact.

The psychological impact of a burn injury will be different for each individual.

How an individual copes after a burn injury can be influenced by many things, including what is happening in their life at the time of the injury, any previous health/mental health difficulties they may have had and any previous significant life events they have experienced.

The clinical psychologist supports the medical team, patients and their families with planning and managing the psychological and emotional recovery from a burn injury.

What can clinical psychologists help with?

Below are examples of some of the difficulties clinical psychologists can offer support with:

- Feelings of anxiety, low mood, stress and upset.
- Pain management e.g. during dressing changes.
- Sleep difficulties.
- Managing upsetting and distressing thoughts e.g. thinking about the events that led to the burn injury.
- Concerns about the appearance of the burn injury and scars.
- Planning for discharge and any worries that someone might have about going home.
- Acute stress reactions to traumatic events e.g. flashbacks and avoidance.
- Developing coping strategies.

If required, family members may also receive support from the psychologist to help them to cope with what has happened.

Will I see a clinical psychologist on the ward?

When you first come to the ward the nursing staff will ask you some questions about your psychological wellbeing – this is called psychosocial screening.

The clinical psychologist will review your psychosocial screen.

They will come and say hello to you if you have expressed concerns about your burn injury and will provide you with an opportunity to ask them any questions.

You can then ask the psychologist for on-going support if this is required.

How often you see the psychologist on the ward will depend on how you are feeling and coping after your burn injury.

You may not see the psychologist at all or you may see them several times during your hospital stay.

You will decide with the psychologist how often you feel you need to receive support.