

Ode to an ulcer

EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Summary

This poem highlights the different clinical presentations, investigations and management of arterial and venous ulcers.

Relevance

Ulcers are a very common condition seen across primary and secondary care with serious health implications for the patient. They are a common exam and OSCE question and are frequently seen on placement.

Take Home Messages

Using creative ways to learn about different medical conditions makes revision a little more bearable, and may help it stick in your memory for longer than just exam time!

Oh ulcer, ulcer, festering there,
Tell me what you are, be fair.
My student, look closer, come, less haste.
For the answer is staring you in the face.

Venous problems are the main cause,
with arterial and diabetic being less common flaws.
Your patient must be committed for the long haul,
For management options vary for all.

Venous drainage issues started the doom:
Blood got lazy, sat there and pooled.
It seeped out of the vessels and dirtied the skin,
Right and left legs are no longer twins.

Where on the leg is the cause of distress?
The inside ankle, it's not looking its best.
It's swollen and puffy, red white or blue.
One thing's for certain – it's not good for you.

If your ulcer has been there a while,
You may have noticed it has developed a style,
It's harder, it's darker, and it's fatter and red
With a leg like a champagne bottle turned on its head.

If your ulcer is painful and hurts when you walk,
Then we need to digress from this venous talk.
You're not helping your feet if you like a smoke,
Got diabetes mellitus or had a stroke.

The top of your foot is the scene of the crime,
A punched out appearance, with a long cap refill time.
If you're unlucky, your pulses are lacking
And bits of your foot may be slowly blacking.

What can we do about this terrible sight?
Before we treat, we need to get the diagnosis right.
We need confirmation of a leg blood supply,
Otherwise your foot may be saying bye-bye.

How do we accomplish such an important task?
A simple procedure, don't worry, relax.
Blood pressure is measured in your arm and your leg,
All you do is lie on the bed.

Depending on the score you achieve,
We'll give you the best treatment that you can receive,
Venous ulcers need a compression bandage
To prevent worsening of the leg damage.

Wrap them tighter at the bottom than the top,
You'll force fluid into vessels, preventing them go pop.
Cleaning your wound and preventing infection,
Will try and regain a bit of perfection.

Another thing that you need to know,
Is that the bandages are bulky and may make you slow.
When they're on, it's a struggle to shower,
But please persist; you've got the willpower.

Arterial ulcers, we haven't forgotten about you!
You've been put into a different queue.
Vascular surgery is your ultimate quest,
To clear out your blood vessels, they know what is best.

Whilst you're waiting to go under the knife,
Pain management will improve your quality of life.
Cleaning your wound and preventing infection,
Will give you an added bit of protection.

Improving the leg supply through an operation
Which enables wound healing, may sometimes be your only
option.
Control of your weight, and stop smoking you're told,
Otherwise your foot will be covered in mould.

Greater care of your feet and toes must be taken,
Otherwise your foot will be forsaken.
Good footwear, exercise and examining the feet,
Will get you back walking on the street.

Don't worry if this is too much to take away,
Nurses are with you every step of the way.
Advice and tips to make you succeed,
Their guidance and expertise is guaranteed.



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