Abstract:

Infusion therapy is among the most common health care interventions, with approximately 90% of hospitalized patients receiving vascular access and an estimated 1.3 million home infusion therapies delivered annually. Whereas most individuals complete their therapy uneventfully, others experience alterations in skin integrity, some significant enough to disrupt therapy. There are limited published data on the incidence of skin damage associated with infusion therapy, and the etiology of damage has not been previously described in detail. Wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nurses have developed a significant understanding of skin-related problems and effective prevention strategies from over 40 years of experience with ostomy patients—a population in which adhesive wear is a constant and localized, superficial skin damage is common. This article will offer a WOC nursing perspective of skin damage and seek to provide a context for understanding and preventing skin damage in the infusion therapy patient.