

## Feature Article

# Opsite Flexifix: An effective adjunct in the management of pain and hypersensitivity in the hand

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*Hand trauma commonly results in pain, swelling and stiffness. These sequelae of injury usually resolve uneventfully. In a small number of patients, however, pain will persist long after the initial trauma. Persisting pain has a significant impact on the patient's ability to participate in the hand therapy programme; this, in turn, hinders restoration of hand function. Pain management strategies are numerous and draw from a wide variety of disciplines, including hand therapy (occupational therapy and physiotherapy), psychology, pharmacology and, occasionally, surgery. Opsite film has been used for a number of years in the management of pain associated with diabetic neuropathy. The types of symptoms experienced by patients with neuropathy are very similar to those described by some patients with hand injuries. For the past 12 months the authors have trialled Opsite Flexifix (Smith and Nephew) on 42 patients with varying diagnoses. Patient response to this pain-relieving strategy has been very positive and the authors believe that inclusion of Opsite Flexifix in a pain management programme is indicated.*

**KEY WORDS** *hand trauma, improved function, Opsite Flexifix, pain.*

## INTRODUCTION

The 16th century barber-surgeon Ambrose Pare is regarded as the 'Father of Modern Surgery'. It would appear that he is also the 'Father of Desensitisation' as he was the first to advocate oil massage as a treatment of hypersensitivity in lower limb amputees who were the casualties of war (Guthrie, 1945). Other early methods of desensitisation included percussion by way of hitting the stump with a mallet or banging it against furniture. Techniques have become somewhat more sophisticated and the myriad

treatment modalities available today is almost matched by the descriptive terms listed by the International Association for the Study of Pain, such as allodynia, hyperalgesia, dysaesthesia, hyperpathia, nociception and hyperaesthesia (Mersky, 1979).

Occupational therapists and physiotherapists specialising in the treatment of patients with upper limb problems employ a variety of treatment media for the management of pain and hypersensitivity. These include: cold therapy, heat therapy, ultrasound, laser, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), systematic desensitisation,

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Accepted for publication December 2000.