



**Figure 4.** Opsite Flexifix applied to a little finger stump reduced hypersensitivity and expedited the hand therapy programme.

hampering movement. Sensibility through the film is unimpeded. These features have resulted in high patient compliance in using this treatment modality.

Patients' wearing timeframe can vary significantly from 1–2 weeks up to several months depending on diagnosis, severity of symptoms and the individual's response to pain management. In the present preliminary study, patients wore the Opsite film for an average of 7.9 weeks (SD = 7.6), although this varied greatly (range 2–52 weeks).

Clinical experience with this product has resulted in it being used earlier in treatment and with more specificity. For example, with digital stumps and fingertip injuries, Opsite Flexifix is applied as soon as the wound is dry to the touch; this is generally between 7 and 14 days (Fig. 4). This early reduction of hypersensitivity gives the patient greater confidence in carrying out a home programme and thus expedites the rehabilitation process. Patients who have undergone digital nerve repairs are monitored for the commencement of paraesthesia which is associated with nerve regeneration. For patients who find this sensation troublesome, the area is covered with Opsite film to dampen the 'pins and needles' sensation.

Opsite Flexifix is generally used on its own; however, it can be used in conjunction with other materials such as silicone gel to treat a raised, painful scar (Fig. 5). Patients who have extreme hypersensitivity can use Opsite in combination with Coban wrap (3M Health Care, St Paul, MN, USA) or beneath neoprene or silicone-lined fingerstalls.

Some unexpected benefits associated with the use of Opsite have included:

1. Opsite can be quite effective in softening and flattening scar. This appears to be due in part to scar compression



**Figure 5.** Opsite Flexifix can be used beneath silicone gel in the treatment of raised, sensitive scars.

and in part to the thermal effects of Opsite as it maintains high humidity on the skin (Neal *et al.*, 1981).

2. In the case of fingertip injuries with jagged nail regrowth or ragged skin, Opsite worn over the nail/pulp area prevents painful 'catching' whilst at the same time allowing normal sensory input.
3. Where there is residual debris following a fingertip injury, Opsite assists with debridement when the film is removed.
4. Patients with anaesthetic or trophic fingertips and the accompanying loss of skin ridging and moisture frequently have difficulty in gaining purchase when gripping. Opsite film provides some traction, thereby assisting grip function.

## CONCLUSION

Opsite has been shown to give symptomatic relief to a significant number of patients with painful diabetic neuropathy. The types of pain described by patients with neuropathy (i.e. burning, shooting or 'pins and needles'), are similar to those reported by some hand patients. This preliminary study found significant reduction in pain immediately following application of Opsite film. Hand conditions for which Opsite Flexifix is particularly helpful