

MIRACULOUS MEDICAL MAGGOTS

13

(6) Some patients report that maggot debridement causes a tickling sensation. This can become very uncomfortable for some people and even painful for others as the maggots roam over delicate nerves and insert themselves into tight crevices in search of necrotic tissue. For some patients, pain medication needs to be supplied.

(7) A dressing must be applied to the wound after the maggots are in place. A dressing is a sterile pad or compress that covers the wound. It is needed to protect the wound from further injury and infection but it is also required to prevent the maggots from escaping. In many cases, it is also needed to shield the patient

from seeing the maggots while they debride the wound. Though MDT therapy might be very useful, many patients find the idea distasteful and disturbing even if it is deemed the most effective course of treatment.

(8) Maggot debridement therapy was actually quite popular in the early 20th century. It was often used by military surgeons in WWI to treat wounds. The advent and widespread use of antibiotics caused MDT to fall out of favor. Currently, with the list of antibiotic resistant bacteria on the rise, MDT has reemerged as an effective therapy to treat ulcers, gangrene, burns and even skin cancer in some cases.

Article Questions

1) What does debridement mean?

Debridement is the process of cleaning a wound by removing dead and unhealthy tissue.(1)

2) What is necrotic tissue?

It is tissue made up of dead and damaged cells.(1)

3) Give three reasons why the green bottle fly is a good species of maggot for wound debridement?

- 1) They are at low risk of myiasis.
- 2) They have antibacterial properties in their secretions that kill bacteria in the wound.
- 3) They attract the patient's fibroblasts to the wound to help speed up wound healing and closure.(3)

4) What three conditions does a wound need for it to be suitable for maggot debridement therapy?

- 1) It needs to be an open wound.
- 2) It needs to be moist.
- 3) It needs to have a good supply of oxygen.(4)

5) How do maggots feed?

They feed through a process called extracorporeal digestion which means that they excrete enzymes that break down the necrotic tissue into a liquid which the maggots then absorb as food.(5)

6) What is one potential negative side effect of maggot debridement therapy?

- 1) An uncomfortable tickling sensation.
- 2) Pain when the maggots crawl over nerves or try to squeeze into crevices.(6)

7) Why did MDT fall out of favor as a therapy after the early 20th Century?

The advent and adoption of antibiotics to treat infections in wounds cause MDT to be less popular.(8)