



29 May 2014

Laser technology revolutionises burns treatment for Australian children

In a first for Australian children, doctors at The Children's Hospital at Westmead are using laser technology for the treatment of burns scars.

This technology, which until recently has only been available to adults in private hospitals, is being used in the Burns Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead to reduce the scarring caused by severe burns. Laser therapy has recently been shown to improve the appearance of disfiguring scars and reduce scar contractures.

Funded by generous donations from NSW Fire and Rescue and the community, the Lumenis UltraPulse CO2 Laser operates by drilling microscopic holes into the burn scar and stimulating the remodelling of collagen during healing. The result is a more supple scar with a better aesthetic appearance. The Ultrapulse Laser has four times the depth of penetration of any other CO2 laser, and as a result, can treat scars previously inaccessible to laser therapy.

Treatment takes less than 10 minutes and leaves minimal damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

Head of the Burns Unit, Dr John Harvey says the use of this technology is an important addition to the management of burns scars and a potential game changer for patients.

"To be the first children's hospital using this technology in Australia is very exciting. Having seen the results of the treatment of burns scars in children using this technology at the Shriners Burn Hospital in Boston and in San Diego we believe it has the potential to transform the lives of our patients," Dr Harvey says.

The Lumenis Ultrapulse CO2 Laser was first shown to be effective by the US Navy in treating servicemen who sustained traumatic burns and scars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over a series of treatments, scars had not only improved aesthetically but range of motion was also enhanced. The technology is now being used widely in the US and in Europe.

Dr Harvey and his team performed the first laser procedures this week, treating the scars of 3 burns patients on Monday afternoon. These children will continue to receive laser treatments every 3 months.

– ENDS –

Media Contact

Sarah Palmer,
The Children's Hospital at Westmead
02 9845 0512, sarah.palmer@health.nsw.gov.au