Section 13: Top Tips for Probing and Packing Wounds

1. Health care professionals must use their clinical judgment when deciding to probe or pack a wound and are accountable for their practice when undertaking this.

2. To gauge the depth of a wound use soft cotton tipped swab or a probe specifically designed to probe wounds.

3. **Gently** probe the wound; it is essential that care is taken not to damage tissue or structures.

4. Take care when inserting and removing the probe.

5. Packing with dressing material: Do not completely fill the wound with the dressing material, **loosely** insert dressing material. The dressing will expand when it absorbs wound exudate and if it is tightly packed this will be detrimental to the wound and cause pain. If using a wound probe to insert dressing material, do so with caution.

6. When packing a wound with dressing material, the end of the wound must be established to avoid dressing material being lost within the wound, leave a piece of the dressing out at the external surface of the wound so it can be easily removed.

7. All pieces of dressing material inserted into a wound must be counted into and out of a wound. The size and type of dressing material used should be noted, eg, ribbon or 10 x 10cm size. Document the above information clearly in the patient's notes.

8. Packing with gel: Always consider a gel to pack narrow cavities such as Flaminal Forte. Inserting a gel instead of dressing material to narrow wounds avoids trauma, is easier to insert and Flaminal Forte does not need removed, it can be 'topped up'. Refer to manufacturer's guidance in the packet insert for full guidance on gel dressings.

9. Gels such as Flaminal Forte can be instilled or inserted using a syringe to cavity wounds, do not fill the entire cavity as Flaminal Forte is an alginate gel and has some capacity to absorb wound exudate, cover with a secondary dressing.

10. If there are concerns that a narrow cavity wound may close over if a gel is inserted rather than dressing material, instil the gel and lightly pack a smaller piece of dressing material into the opening of the wound to keep the opening open.

11. New 3D fit dressing: Biatain Silicone is described as a 3D fit dressing suitable for wounds that are 2 cm deep or less, wound filler is not required. Biatain silicone will conform down in to the wound bed; you do not have to use a gel or dressing material to fill the wound. Refer to manufacturer's guidance for full instruction.