

OASIS Alert

Wound Care: GO HIGH ON YOUR OWN SUPPLY

Gauze and saline may look like a bargain on paper. But when it comes to treating wounds, you could be shortchanging your patient care and your coffers if you haven't considered advanced wound care products.

Home health agencies throughout the country are beginning to realize the enormous potential for savings by using advanced wound dressings rather than the traditional wet-to-dry standbys. Although advanced wound care products will cost agencies more money than simple gauze and saline supplies, HHAs will easily recoup this up-front expenditure in labor savings, states **Patti Johnston**, a consultant with **Positive Outcomes Inc.** in The Woodlands, TX. Advanced products are meant for extended wear so they don't need to be changed everyday like conventional dressings. That, in turn, translates into fewer visits, she explains.

Last year, one agency saved \$86,0000 by switching from gauze to advanced wound care products, Johnston tells **Eli**. This huge savings comes directly from investing in wound care products that can decrease the number of visits the HHA must make, she explains.

"The average reimbursement is about \$2,100 on a wound patient every 60 days," Johnston maintains. Therefore, she says, an HHA that is sending a nurse out to change a dressing daily at \$100 per visit is going to pay out \$6,000 over that same period. Thus, each wound care patient who relies on a daily dose of gauze and saline can cost that agency nearly \$4,000 in non-reimbursable labor expenses over a 60-day timeframe.

The benefits of using the advanced supplies definitely outweigh their higher cost, agrees **Kathy Grissom**, vice president of Home and Community-Based Services at **Ouachita County Medical Center** in Camden, AK.

Grissom reports that her organization has "noticed substantial savings" by scaling back its reliance on gauze and saline. Whenever possible, she states, her agency chooses an advanced dressing that can be changed "every three days instead of going twice a day or every day on your normal wet-to-dry dressings."