

Activity Title: Wound Packing

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Pathways to Accessing Training in Healthcare-Minnesota (PATH-MN)

Overview

This activity introduces participants to wound packing, a technique used to control severe bleeding (hemorrhage) from a traumatic injury. Participants will practice packing a simulated gunshot wound using gauze and a wound-packing trainer. Working in pairs, one participant will simulate bleeding using the trainer while the other performs the wound-packing procedure. Participants will then switch roles and repeat the activity.

Careers Associated: Registered Nurses, Surgical Technologists, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

Supplies Required

General Setup

- Tables for the wound trainer
- Absorbent pads to put under the trainers
- Garbage can

For each pair of participants

- A wound packing trainer, which includes a syringe

For each participant

- A pair of surgical or medical gloves
- Approximately 30 mL of simulated blood
- Approximately 10 gauze squares, or one roll of continuous gauze

Time Required

- Setting up: Approximately 10 minutes, ideally done before class/ before the event. Duration may vary depending on the number of wound trainers.
- Instruction: Approximately 5 minutes.
- Activity: Approximately 8 minutes per pair of participants, or 4 minutes per person.

- Clean up: Approximately 15 minutes, depending on how many wound trainers there are.
- **Total Time:** Approximately 40 minutes

Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate the ability to control bleeding from a traumatic wound using wound-packing techniques.
- Identify healthcare careers in which wound packing may be used.

Activity

Setup:

- Place an absorbent pad and a wound-packing trainer on each table.
- Fill the syringe with approximately 30mL of simulated blood and attach it to the trainer. The syringe does not have a lid, and it twists onto the trainer via tubing. One way to fill the syringe is to fill a cup with simulated blood, then fill it from there. It may be easier than filling directly from the bottle.
- Place a stack of gauze next to each trainer. Provide only the amount of gauze needed for one participant at a time.
- Have all participants put on gloves before beginning the activity.

Introduction: The wound trainers often generate immediate interest and curiosity from participants. Explain that participants will be learning wound packing, a skill used in a variety of healthcare and emergency response settings. The trainer simulates a gunshot wound to the thigh. In a real-life emergency, wound packing may be performed by a trained bystander, EMT, emergency department nurse, or other healthcare professional. Surgical technologists and registered nurses may also use wound-packing techniques in clinical settings as part of patient treatment and wound management.

Demonstration: Before participants begin, demonstrate the wound-packing procedure and explain each step.

Participant Instructions

- Have participants form pairs and ensure both are wearing gloves.
- Confirm that the syringe is filled with approximately 30 mL of simulated blood and attached to the trainer.
- One participant will operate the syringe to simulate bleeding, while the other performs wound packing. Participants will switch roles after completing the activity.

When Participant is Operating the Syringe

- Apply steady pressure to the syringe plunger to simulate bleeding.
- If the plunger becomes difficult to push, stop applying pressure. This indicates that the wound has been effectively packed, and the bleeding is controlled.
- Continuing to apply pressure may force fluid out of the tubing and cause spills.

When Participant is Packing the Wound

- Take a section of gauze and firmly pack it into the wound using your fingers.
- Continue adding gauze while maintaining firm, consistent pressure.
- The goal is to apply pressure deep within the wound to compress the damaged blood vessel and stop the bleeding.

Additional Instruction: If using individual gauze squares, explain that these are not typically recommended in real clinical settings because small pieces can be difficult to track and may be retained within a wound cavity. Continuous gauze is generally preferred for wound packing.

The activity ends when either:

- The participant successfully stops the bleeding, OR
- The simulated blood supply is exhausted.

Then:

- Remove the gauze from the trainer and dispose of it in the garbage.
- Ideally, the removed gauze will have formed the shape of the wound's cavity.

Reset for the Next Participant

1. Detach the syringe from the tubing.
2. Refill it with approximately 30 mL of simulated blood.
3. Reattach the syringe to the trainer.
4. Provide fresh gauze.
5. Have participants switch roles and repeat the activity.

After both participants have completed the exercise, have them remove and dispose of their gloves.

Conclusion & Assessment

Assessment of Success: Success is measured by the participant's ability to control the simulated bleeding before the available blood supply is depleted.

Closing Discussion: As participants finish the activity, invite them to share their observations and ask questions. Participants may comment that their “patient would not have survived.” Remind them that effective emergency bleeding control requires extensive training and practice. This activity is intended only as an introductory exposure to the skill and provides a basic understanding of wound-packing techniques.

Cleanup

1. Dispose of absorbent pads in a regular garbage bin.
2. If transporting the activity materials, a used absorbent pad may be used to wrap the wound trainers until they can be properly cleaned.
3. Rinse the wound-packing trainers and syringes thoroughly with clean water.
4. Flush clean water through the tubing system.
5. Allow all components to dry completely.
6. Restock supplies as needed for future use.

Images

