**Offloading the ulcer area**

**Evidence statement**

Patients who have unilateral plantar ulcers should be assessed for treatment using total contact casting to optimise the healing rate of ulcers. Prefabricated walkers can be used as an alternative if rendered irremovable (SIGN 116, March 2010. Evidence Level B).

The current evidence around offloading pressure/friction from ulcer sites is mainly based on plantar neuropathic ulceration. The Scotchcast boot is the only referenced option to date that has been cited for use in both neuropathic and neuro-ischaemic ulceration (Jones, 1991). Adhesive felt aperture padding is not currently recommended for long term use in the management of foot ulceration due to hygiene/efficacy concerns.

The off loading device options are listed in descending order of current evidence strength:

1) Total contact casting can reduce healing time to a mean of approximately 6 weeks (Laing et al, 1992; Mueller et al 1989; Myreson et al 1992)
2) Prefabricated walkers, when made irremovable, are a viable alternative to total contact casting (Armstrong et al, 2005; Katz et al, 2005; Nabuurs-Fransen et al, 2005)
4) Half shoes reduces time to complete closure of the ulcer to a mean of 10 weeks (Chantelau et al 1994)
6) Poron/Cleron insoles (McPoil & Cornwall, 1992; Pawelka et al, 1997; Brodsky et al, 1998)

Rockers bars/soles (which are incorporated into total contact casts, removable cast walker and scotchcast boot) may be a vital element in offloading plantar (forefoot) ulceration.

Post-operative footwear may be used to accommodate dressings and insoles temporarily.

**NB Pressure off-loading in the diabetic foot should be looked at over the 24 hour period. It will be necessary to address pressure issues in the seated and prone positions as well as in mobile patients.**

For further information and advice please contact:

NHS Highland Orthotics Department 01463 704178

NHS Highland Podiatry Department:

- SECHP 01463 723250
- Mid Highland CHP 01463 723250
- Lochaber area 01397 709800
- North Highland CHP –
  - East Sutherland 01408 664023
  - NW Sutherland 01955 604758
  - East Caithness 01955 604758
  - West Caithness 01847 893442
- Argyll & Bute CHP –
  - North Argyll & the Isles 01631 788977
  - Mid Argyll & Islay/Jura 01546 462199
  - Kintyre 01586 552224