A review of patient and skin characteristics associated with skin tears.

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Abstract: Objective: Skin tears are the most common wound among the elderly and have the potential to cause infection, form chronic wounds, reduce quality of life and increase healthcare costs. Our aim was to identify studies that reviewed patient and skin characteristics associated with skin tears. Method: A review of skin tear studies reported in the English literature between 1980 and 2013 was undertaken using the following electronic databases: PubMed, Medline, CINAHL, Embase, Scopus, Evidence Based and Medicine Reviews (EBM). Search terms included aged, skin tears or lacerations, skin tearing, geri tear, epidermal tear and prevalence. Results: There were 343 articles found with using the search terms. After abstract review nine were found to be relevant to the search. The principle findings from these eight published articles and one unpublished study revealed that the most common patient characteristics were a history of skin tears, impaired mobility and impaired cognition. Skin characteristics associated with skin tears included senile purpura, ecchymosis and oedema. Conclusion: This review provides an overview of identified patient and skin characteristics that predispose the elderly to skin tears and exposes the lack of research within this domain. Declaration of Interest: R. Rayner is a recipient of a 2013 Australian Postgraduate Award, Curtin University Postgraduate Scholarship and a Wound Management Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) PhD stipend. The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine, Curtin University and the Silver Chain Group, Western Australia are participants in the Wound Management Innovation CRC. No conflict of interest exists among the authors.

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