

## **Minimising the Risk of Litigation in Minor Surgery**

### ***Excisions***

Surgery to the face, if in any doubt, should be referred to a specialist

Care is necessary when operating on the shoulder, chest and deltoid regions as they are well-known areas to develop keloid scarring

Excision of a hypertrophied scar is best referred to a specialist

Practice Nurses should always seek the opinion of the GP when the wound is not healing satisfactorily

It is advisable to have an agreed protocol covering post-operative care and when to remove sutures

The removal of sutures and the state of the wound should be documented in the patient's records

A Minor Surgery Record Book is useful for recording relevant information, i.e. operation performed, local anaesthetic and sutures used, histology results and the incidence of any complication e.g. infection

Patients should be supplied with information covering follow-up arrangements and post-operative care, the complications that may occur and who to contact if they do

### ***Intra/Peri Articular Injections***

Full aseptic precautions are essential

Avoid injecting infected areas

Urgent referral to a specialist is required if it is suspected that the joint is infected

Particular care is needed to avoid damage to the local neural or vascular structures

### ***Chemicals***

Always keep phenol separate from lignocaine and cleansing agents

Only open a bottle when required

Always keep phenol in a locked cupboard after use

Use protective jelly to the surrounding skin before the application of silver nitrate

Ensure that silver nitrate does not touch the surrounding normal skin

***Cryotherapy***

The cryoprobe may cause blistering and scarring if left in contact with the skin for long periods (recommended 10-15 seconds, repeated at three-weekly intervals if necessary)

Patients should be warned of possible scarring and this should be recorded in the medical records

***Electrocautery***

Spirit-based skin cleaners should be avoided when undertaking electrocautery

Care should be taken that the cautery does not make contact with dressings, swabs etc.