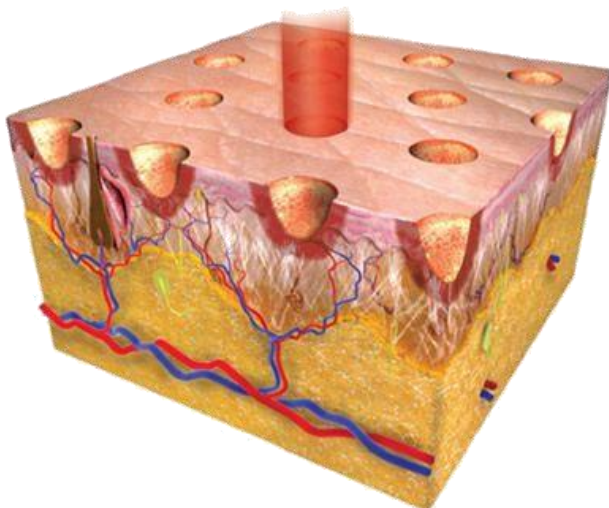




New laser provides a ray of hope for scar reduction in burn survivors

The word *laser* is actually an acronym derived from the phrase *Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation*. In layman's terms this means light energy of a single frequency is concentrated in a beam. The intense light beam vaporizes parts of the burn scar, creating tiny "wells" in which new healing occurs. This allows for collagen and elastin to be formed, reducing the hardness, redness and thickness of the scar.

The latest research suggests that the laser beam may actually be activating the patient's own stem cells to create new skin. Superficial ablation (the laser ablative creation of shallower, wider pits in the epidermis) helps particularly with pigmentation problems in the scar.



Laser scar treatment takes form of a 20-minute session and can be repeated every 3 months, typically up to 11 or 12 times. The resulting cosmetic improvement and improved elasticity of the skin is cumulative *and* permanent.



The technique yields positive results for immature new scars as well as mature scars that have been there for many years. There is minor discomfort to the patient. Adults are usually treated awake, while children are sedated or anaesthetized.

Professor Matthias Donelan from Shriners Hospital for Children in Boston visited South Africa in November last year to train South African burn surgeons in this novel treatment. His motto is that every scar has a right to live and that remodelling the existing scar with laser technology is far less damaging than conventional extensive plastic surgery reconstructive procedures, which are in themselves disfiguring.

Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital received their first laser system in early November 2016. Phoenix's Dr Roux Martinez visited Shriners Hospital in September 2016 to learn the technique and she is looking forward to treating patients at Red Cross Hospital using the new laser from November 2016. In the coming years this new facility will provide hope to thousands of children with disfiguring burn scars.

Phoenix celebrates 10 years of caring for young burn survivors and their families

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Phoenix Burns Project. The organisation was founded on the 13th of October 2006 by a group of Capetonians who had decided to do something to address the plight of children with severe burn injuries. In South Africa, burn injury is still the third commonest cause of death in children under the age of 14 years, and accounts for 11 per cent of injury-related deaths annually. We care for any burnt child that needs our help, regardless of their race, religion or national origin. To date, over 8,800 children have benefitted in one way or another from Phoenix's support.

In the first eight years of its existence, Phoenix was fortunate enough to have a few stalwart members who devoted their time and talents to build the new organisation. Special mention needs to be made of David Waight, who served as Treasurer from 2006 – 2014. Patricia Waight and Mary Lack served on the Phoenix Council from 2006 – 2014. In addition, Patricia served a term as Secretary and Mary served a term as Vice-President.

During 2007 – 2010 we were under the patronage of Archbishop Lawrence Henry. Since 2010 we have been under the patronage of Archbishop Stephen Brislin. We acknowledge and thank our patrons for the close interest they have taken in Phoenix and for

their support over the years. We also acknowledge with thanks the support of our Chaplains, Fr David Musgrave (2006 – 2007) and Fr Andrew Cox (2007 – present).

During the past six years, Phoenix has benefitted enormously from the generous support of the UK-based organisation Action for Burns and Children (ABC) and Cripps Sears. The Australian company Woodside has also been a generous supporter in the past few years. We are also extremely grateful to our individual donors, many of whom have been donating for more than five years.

The memorial timeline below recalls some of the highlights of the past 10 years. This period has been marked by a progressive growth in the scope and intensity of Phoenix's fundraising and relief activities. Our goal has been, and continues to be, the rehabilitation and sustained well-being of children with burn injuries.

We would like to thank the many individuals and organisations that have supported Phoenix during the past ten years. Through your generosity you have given hope to many children who would otherwise not have had hope of help. We look forward to working with you in the next ten years.



Making rehab exercises fun

Phoenix provides video game system to promote mobilisation and fitness

Burn survivors often need to follow a regimen of exercises as part of their rehabilitation. Children are extremely fearful of these painful exercises and go to great lengths to avoid them. Popular experience (which is also supported by research) shows that children tend to carry out their physiotherapy exercises much more enthusiastically if these exercises are part of a game. To this end, Phoenix recently installed an interactive Xbox® games system in the Burn Unit at Red Cross Children's Hospital. The system is equipped with a number of interactive sport and adventure games. The children love the virtual environment and no longer have to be coaxed to visit the physio room in the ward. The physiotherapists simply choose the games that require the movements they wish to see the children performing. The system also doubles as an entertainment centre for the ward, where they can watch children's movies.



South Africa's first skin bank established

Deep burns can only heal by grafting normal unburnt skin onto the burn area. This skin is usually obtained from the patient him or herself. However, massive burns pose a problem in that there is insufficient unburnt skin left to cover the burnt areas. Survival then depends on the availability of donor skin from another donor; either a living person or someone just deceased.

Donor skin sourced from another person is only a temporary measure as the body will eventually reject this skin in 2 to 3 weeks, but during this period the physiological mayhem caused by the burn, such as loss of fluids and heat, and exposure to infection, can be limited.

Many artificial synthetic and biosynthetic dressings have been developed, but none have so far been as effective as donor skin. Cultured epithelial grafts are under development, but these are very costly and take 2 to 6 weeks to grow. This leaves the patient exposed to severe risks during this time.

Many countries have skin banks where donor skin is stored and readily available for use in the event of massive burns or disasters. Consent for

harvesting skin from donors is similar to that for organ donation and skin can be harvested within 24 hours after death. Donors of all ages can be used as long as they do not have any infections or advanced cancers. Because the skin is only a temporary cover, and because burn patients are so immunosuppressed, no compatibility testing or immune-suppressants are required. All skin colours are suitable and tattooed skin is usable as well.

A very thin layer of skin is removed from the donor, identical to the process used in a normal skin graft. The skin can then be preserved in glycerol for up to two years or in liquid nitrogen for up to five years.

The newly established skin bank at the Centre for Tissue Engineering at Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria has brought new hope for burn survivors across the country. Ten patients have already owe their lives to this skin bank, thanks to the generosity of skin donors.

You can become a life-saving donor too. To find out how you can become a donor, visit www.recycleme.co.za.

SUPPORTER'S PAGE

Anne Pickering Queen of hearts

When it comes to personal commitment, dedication and hands-on involvement with burn survivors, Anne Pickering provides a sterling example of a volunteer all-rounder. Since 2013 she has organised the annual *M&M Fundraiser*, a dinner-dance event held at Kelvin Grove Country Club in aid of burn survivors. The event is held in May each year and has started to build a loyal following, with some participants coming from as far afield as Johannesburg to support this event. The event has grown in size, popularity and sponsorship each year, thanks to the dedication of Anne and her team of helpers. Even as the 2016 event was under-way, she was already talking about plans for the next *M&M* event in 2017!

An active member of the Friends of the Red Cross Children's Hospital, Anne devotes a considerable number of hours every month to the burn unit at the hospital. She also spends a lot of time with the children at St Joseph's Home who are supported through Phoenix's Education Fund. These children have come to regard her as a dependable and constant supportive factor in their lives, always there for a chat, or to read them a story or to take them for an outing. Anne – we salute you!



Rachel Zurich An inspiration to us all

Champion 11-year-old fund-raiser Rachel Zurich proves that you are never too young to make a difference. Rachel provided over 50 Mums Care Packs and knitted beanies for all the children in the ward. She also presented the Children's Trust with a R10,000 donation towards burn care. This was not the first time that this special young lady has reached out to burn survivors – but it was the first time that she handled the arrangements and communications all her own! Well done, Rachel! You are an inspiration to us all!



Thank YOU, donors!

We gratefully thank all our many individual donors and the following organisations for their on-going support: Action for Burns and Children, Anne Pickering and *M&M* Fundraiser donors, Catholic Women's League, Catholic Bishops' Lenten Appeal, Cripps Sears & Partners, Phoenix Flyers, Woodside.

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