

### THE SOLUTION IN A SOLUTION

By Terry Bein, RN, PCM

We were given the opportunity to provide care for a young lady with ovarian cancer and scleroderma. Her self esteem was poor related to her deformities and the odorous wound from the cancer. The family dynamics were perplexing - The patient's mother was the primary caregiver, and her husband didn't participate in her care. The children were all in school and ranged in age from 6 to 16. Due to the family's low income, the IDG requested and received a window unit air-conditioner as well as electrical utility support from VistaCare Foundation donations. Chaplain and social work were heavily involved with frequent visitations for spiritual support as well as moral, and social services support via our social worker. As the weeks progressed our patients' cancerous wound progressively became excessively malodorous. The IDG was concerned as each member of the team visiting began to see the entire family falling apart because the odor was permeating the entire home and the children and husband were repulsed. No matter what we tried, from peppermint oil, incense candles, various wound dressings and antibiotics, the odor lingered. The PCM contacted the American Cancer Society and surfed the internet in hopes of finding a solution. The IDG brain-stormed and we came up blank. Finally in desperation the PCM called a hospice nurse that was known in the community for her adjunctive approaches to herbal usage. The nurse proposed a special blend of "essential oils" mixed in normal saline. The patient, mother, husband and physician agreed to experiment with the solution. Within 12 hours of application directly to the wound, the odor diminished to a level that was only noticed in the patient's bedroom. By the next day, after twice daily dressing changes, the odor was gone. The husband, mom, and children began to venture into the patient's room more frequently, even to the point of the younger children getting on the bed to "hug and kiss" mom. A "solution in a solution" had brought this family back together, a true "final gift"! A family reunited to share the final days with this lovely young lady.

Recipe for aromatherapy/wound odor control (The "Solution" recipe)

- 1) BERGAMOT- 15 drops
- 2) LAVENDER- 30 drops
- 3) TEA TREE- 30 drops

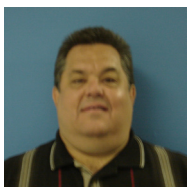
Add the above essential oils to 250cc of saline or H2O.

Shake vigorously before each application.

Saturate 4X4's with the above solution and cleanse wound.

Soak Kerlex or other appropriate dressing with the above solution and apply to wound.

Always obtain a physician order for any treatments.



**Terry Bein, RN, PCM:** Terry has been employed with VistaCare since October 1996. He began his VistaCare career as an RNCM and in 2002 moved into a Patient Care Manager position. Terry is a 1990 graduate of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center (UTHSC). Prior to VistaCare Terry worked for 7 years at the VA hospital in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit. Terry has been married for 5 years and has two college aged children and one flea hound, named Collie.