Appendix J: Wound Swabbing Technique

Collecting swab specimens using Levine’s technique provides a reasonably accurate measure of wound bioburden (Gardner et al., 2006). Obtain a wound culture when clinical signs and symptoms of infection are present.

Technique:

- Use sterile cotton-tipped swab and culture medium in a pre-packaged collection and transport system. Community nurses should not allow transport medium to freeze or become overheated in the car before using it.

- Thoroughly rinse wound with normal saline (non-bacteriostatic).

- Do not swab pus, exudate, hard eschar or necrotic tissue.

- Rotate the swab tip in a 1 cm² area of clean granulation tissue for a period of 5 seconds, using enough pressure to release tissue exudate. This may be painful so warn the patient of the possibility of pain and pre-medicate with analgesia if possible.

- Remove protective cap from culture medium and insert cotton-tipped applicator into the culture medium without contaminating the applicator.

- Transport to the laboratory at room temperature within 24 hours.

Note: In Ontario, the Ontario Medical Laboratories Technologies Act, 1991 requires a health-care practitioner’s order to process the culture.


Bibliography:

