



Dr Craig Lacey, Arnold Veeran and Leandi Richter conduct the Meek technique at Netcare The Bay Hospital on Friday



Dr Craig Lacey

Ground-breaking surgery for ship burn victims

Mia Moorcroft

TWO Philippine seamen who recently suffered severe burns in an explosion on their ship anchored offshore from Richards Bay, may soon return home after local doctors used an innovative skin graft procedure to treat their second and third degree burns.

Surgeon Dr Craig Lacey, assisted by Acroteq Medical Technology's Arnold Veeran and occupational therapist Leandi Richter, for the first time on Friday applied the unique Humeca Meek technique on one of the patients' burnt arm and hand at Netcare The Bay Hospital.

The procedure essentially allows harvested skin to expand by quadrupling its original size on a wound.

This has proven to be exceptionally effective in treating large burn areas with a high survival rate of skin graft, shorter time of skin fusion and faster recovery time.

The Bay Hospital is only the second private hospital in South Africa to use this treatment.

Tomorrow (Friday), the patient's legs will be treated by the team.

'This technique is very exciting and if it works as well as we expect, we will certainly use it again going forward,' said Dr Lacey.

New skin graft technique introduced to Bay Hospital

'We deal with a lot of burn cases, especially children, and mortality rates are high.

'The procedures can also be extremely expensive, so public hospitals tend to battle with these cases.'

Veeran said Meek is a relatively simple technique.

'Skin graft is placed on a cork plate, cut into 196 pieces 3mm by 3mm wide and then pulled apart on an elastic gauze into 'tiny islands' equally distanced apart that will grow together until the burnt area is fully covered.

'What is fantastic about this procedure is that in such an advanced technological society, we have managed to go back to a manual technique with incredible results for burn victims,' said Veeran.

Dr Lacey warned that parents need to keep a close eye on children around cooking pots, stoves, fires and when using paraffin.

'We see countless children rushed into hospital with burn wounds, particularly during winter.

'Always remain aware of the dangers when cooking. The most common cases are toddlers reaching for a pot, which tips over spilling boiling water on their faces and upper bodies.'