"Itching, is there a remedy ?" 
a pilot study with a rehydration gel-creme in burn patients

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Introduction
Itching after burns is a matter of body and mind, but little is known regarding its exact mechanism. Results of studies show a gradual decrease in itch intensity in time, but still moderate to serious itch several years after burns (van Loey e.a. ). In 2006 a gel-creme that supposed to decrease itch was introduced in our Burn Centre. The main ingredients of Alhydram® are Aloe Vera (Aruba Aloe Barbadensis), vitamins C and E and Jojoba oil. To determine its efficacy we performed a pilot study.

Methods
Since November 2006 in the outpatient clinic of the Burn Centre Medical Centre Rijnmond-Zuid itching is scored in patients using the Visual Analogue Thermometer (VAT) or the Numeric Rating Scale (NRS 0-10). Measurements were done before application of Alhydram® and after 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month and 3 months after the start of treatment. Follow up data were collected on outpatient visit or by phone.

Results
Data analyses with ANOVA and T-test show before starting Alhydram® that the mean VAT/NRS for itch intensity is 6.7 (see graphic). There is a decrease in time; the mean score after one week is 3.5, after two weeks 3.6, after one month 2.5 and after three months 2.4. There is no relation between VAT/NRS and gender, age, TBSA %, location, cause of burn or combination therapy with other scar treatment. Besides a decreased VAT score parents of young children mentioned their child was more at ease and had a better night’s rest. One patient had discontinued Alhydram® because there was no itch anymore after 1 week and 1 patient reduced antihistaminic medication. Two patients said they stopped the creme because of irritation of the skin.

Conclusions
"Itching can make you crazy". Our first experience indicates that this gel-creme could decrease itch intensity after burns, which contributes to improvement of quality of life. Ongoing research will include additional assessment by a Burns Itch Questionnaire, scar evaluation like the Vancouver Scar Scale, Patients and Observer Scar Assessment Scale, cuto – and dermaspectometrie and a Quality of Life questionnaire.

Reference (1) NEE van Loey, e.a. Itching following burns; epidemiology and predictors; accepted in Burns 2007.