Claims

1. A wound dressing comprising a mat of gel forming fibres comprising between about 0.1% and 20% by weight of silver, the mat having an open structure reinforced with textile fibres or threads, or fibres or threads of limited absorbency for use in the treatment of wounds, wherein the mat has a needle punch density of less than 60 per cm^2.

2. A wound dressing as claimed in claim ι wherein the mat is a mat of ~~fluid jet entangled or~~ needle punched nonwoven gel forming fibres.

3. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the mat has a basis weight of from 50 to 200 grams per square meter.

4. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the open structure is defined by a regular or irregular, two or three dimensional arrangement of fibres with a large volume for a given mass in which the free internal volume exceeds the solid fibre volume.

~~5. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the mat has a needle punch density of less than 60 per cm^2.~~

~~6~~5. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the mat is reinforced with textile fibres blended with the gel-forming fibres in the mat.

~~7~~6. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the mat is reinforced with stitch-bonding in a thread of textile fibre.

~~8~~7. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the mat is reinforced with stitch-bonding in a line of longitudinal stitches.

~~9~~8. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the gel forming fibres are modified cellulose gel forming fibres.

~~10~~9. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the dressing has a rate of moisture loss at least 25% lower than a dressing made from a mat with a needle punch density of 60 per cm^2 or higher.

~~11~~10. A wound dressing as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the dressing maintains the hydration of the wound by having a rate of moisture loss (as measured by the percentage weight loss from the dressing) of less than 75% over the first 48 hours of wear.