Importance of preventing pressure ulcers and contributing to patient safety

Pressure ulcers can be devastating for the people they affect. They cause pain and distress and can reduce people’s ability to get on with their day-to-date lives. They require what are often long and arduous courses of treatment and they can make people vulnerable to potentially life-threatening infections.

In addition, pressure ulcers cost the NHS an estimated £1.8-2.6 billion a year. It is widely considered that with appropriate assessment and intervention, many pressure ulcers can be prevented. Recognising which patients are at risk of developing pressure ulcers early on is an essential part of the prevention care.

Pressure ulcer prevention is one of the 9 points of care priorities in adult acute care element of the Scottish Patient Safety Programme and pressure ulcer grades 2-4 are one of the four avoidable harms in the Scottish Patient Safety Indicator.

Patient Safety Education Scenario
Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers

Pressure ulcers can affect people of all ages, shapes and sizes and can affect people in all settings, whether acute, community, care home or their own home. Health and care staff have a role to play in helping protect people from the dangers of pressure ulcer development or, if they already have one, to give them the best quality evidence-based treatment possible.
Educational Resources for Managing and Preventing Pressure Ulcers

NHS Education for Scotland launched the Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers resource in 2009 and updated the resources in 2014 following guidance published by the European Pressure Ulcers Advisory Panel. The resource takes the form of an online programme comprising 8 modules and is also available as a hard copy reference and workbook. The resource is aimed at health and care workers in acute and community settings across Scotland. The resources combines theory with online and workplace activities which reinforces how the learning can be applied in practice.

The resource aims to help the learner understand pressure ulcers – how they form, how they are treated and, crucially how they can be prevented.

Of the health and care staff who accessed the online resource and provided feedback, 89% stated that the resource met their expectations and 97% stated they would recommend it to a colleague.

The Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers resource forms part of the Integrated Programme for the National Co-ordinated Approach to Tissue Viability and complements many of the resources within the Tissue Viability Online Toolkit including best practice statements, grading tools and care bundles. The Toolkit is available at www.tissueviabilityonline.com

Positive impact of the resource

I believe I am now more confident in pressure care management, and I feel that it has enhanced my abilities to improve future care needs of my patients and able to confidently give advice with mentoring my students.

Charge Nurse

I will be much more aware of safety issues and the types of care to provide to a patient with a pressure ulcer.

Healthcare Support Worker

It gives me more knowledge on what to look out for with residents and how to best treat them. I feel more confident after this course.

Care Home Manager

The pressure ulcer programme was an excellent educational resource and signpost when delivering training to students attending college.

NHS Nurse trainer

Continue to ensure adequate pressure relief in the patient's home and prevent as many pressure sores as possible occurring using knowledge and skills gained from the learning.

Care Assistant

This resource has reinforced my knowledge and awareness of all aspects of pressure ulcer care and treatment and will enhance patient care delivery.

District Nurse


2 Scottish Patient Safety Programme website (March 2016)