Importance of Preventing Pressure Ulcers in Patients
Pressure ulcers\(^1\) can be devastating for people they affect. They cause pain and distress, thus restricting patients’ ability to manage their day-to-day lives. Pressure ulcers have also been associated with skin and soft tissue infections.

In addition, as much as 4% of UK NHS spending (£2 billion) may be consumed by pressure ulcer care,\(^2\) but it is widely considered that with appropriate assessment and intervention, up to 95% of pressure ulcers are preventable.

On-line Resource for Managing and Preventing Pressure Ulcers
In November 2009 NES launched a training resource, “The Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers,” to support healthcare staff in a caring role. The Pressure Ulcer Educational Workbook forms part of the Integrated Programme for the National Co-ordinated Approach to Tissue Viability which contains a wide range of resources and other tools relevant to tissue viability.

Pressure ulcer prevention is also highlighted as one of the key topic areas of the Scottish Patient Safety Alliance Programme.

Both the Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers workbook and its online version combine theory with online and workplace activities. This reinforces how the learning can be applied in practice. Its aim is to help the learner understand pressure ulcers – how they form, how they are treated and, crucially, how they can be prevented.

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\(^1\)The European Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel describes pressure ulcers as ‘an area of localised damage to the skin and underlying tissue caused by pressure, shear, friction and/or combination of these.’ [http://www.epuap.org/]

Using the Training Resource: Contributing to Patient Safety

Of the healthcare staff who accessed the online version of the training programme 88% stated that the education would have a positive effect on their practice. One Healthcare Support Worker stated that he/she would be “more able to recognise when people are at risk from pressure ulcers, keep people mobile and contact nurses as soon as a patient’s skin is at risk.”

A registered nurse who is also responsible for delivering non-registered nurse induction stated that she found the on-line training a useful training tool because the training does not only support healthcare support workers from private care homes but also people who are new to the job with no prior training and experience. She finds it useful to be able to refer trainees to particular sections of the handbooks and to the website to extend their understanding of patient care.

As a nurse trainer employed by the NHS and also delivering training to students attending college courses, the Pressure Ulcers on-line course was an excellent back-up education resource.

The Prevention and Management of Pressure Ulcers course is part of a wider programme carried out in conjunction with NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (now Healthcare Improvement Scotland) and complements many of the resources within the Tissue Viability online toolkit. These include best practice statements, grading tools and care bundles. This programme of work is clearly linked to practice improvement methodologies which facilitate the transition of knowledge into practice.

The toolkit is housed on the NHS QIS website at www.tissueviabilityonline.com

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http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/initiatives/patient-safety