

Your Turn, our trust

Pressure ulcers are a major cause for concern to the National Health Service, and as a largely preventable, identifiable adverse event should be high on the agenda for any health care provider



In recent months the publication of the Chief Nursing Officers High Impact Actions, including Skin Matters, the establishment of associated Commissioning for Quality and Innovation schemes has raised the profile at senior management and commissioner level. The Patient Safety First campaign has also highlighted the priority that should be placed on the reporting of pressure ulcers and the successful treatment.

The challenge of prevention may appear to start back to front, firstly identifying the number of wounds developing and patients affected and the use of the Department of Health Pressure Ulcer Productivity Calculator, calculating the financial costs to the organisation. Once this step has been taken actions should and must follow.

Within Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust a prevention and management strategy was developed following the rise in reported incidents. This was not a case of a sudden

increase in events, but rather the increasing awareness of the importance of reporting accurately.

One of the many aspects of the approach adopted included joining with the Your Turn Campaign. This is aimed at raising awareness amongst the general public through the website (www.your-turn.org.uk), events, advice leaflets, patient at risk cards, lapel badges and working collaboratively with the health service to improve outcomes and aim for no avoidable pressure ulcers. Your Turn also works in conjunction with the National Patient Safety Agency to help achieve this aim.

Each clinical area was encouraged to develop a Your Turn display of information, including link nurse details and advice booklets. Patient credit cards with simple tips were developed, including one for people with learning disabilities. The hope being that this group would carry the card with them and start to ask questions, 'am I at risk', whenever in contact

with health or social services. Staff cards were also developed that carried the question 'is my patient at risk?'

These have proved particularly useful amongst student nurses and newly qualified staff. Events were also held within the outpatients department with displays and quizzes aimed at raising awareness.

Across the Trust, awareness has improved and with other aspects of the strategy coming into place we are moving in a positive direction. There are several areas of excellent practice across the UK from which we are learning, for example, SKIN bundles which have proven really successful in South Wales. This excellent piece of work gives us motivation to continue our approach and that reduction and prevention is an achievable aim and not simply an aspiration.

Education at commissioner, health authority and managerial level needs to continue. To achieve this nationally there is a need for sustainable investment in terms of NHS organisation's commitment, resources and funds. However working collaboratively internally and externally with Your Turn, National Patient Safety Agency and the Department of Health will contribute to that success. ■

Helen Shoker, lead tissue viability nurse at Walsall Manor Hospital. For further information on the Your Turn campaign visit www.your-turn.org.uk

What are the impacts?

Within wound care specialist circles this is a welcome and long overdue recognition. Pressure ulceration is a debilitating condition for the patient, staff and health care services and can also prove costly. Once pressure damage has occurred it has the following impacts:

- a negative effect on the individual, delaying a return to health and increasing the risk of infection, pain and potential sepsis
- increasing length of stay in health care funded organisations
- increasing nursing/medical time and interventions
- associated costs of managing a wound from the provision of equipment to wound management products, pain relief and antibiotics
- possible effect on the reputation of the organisation.