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## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIONS: A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE**

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The aging of the Portuguese population, the multiple pathologies in the same patient, sedentary habits and nutritional deficiencies have changed the health care needs in the treatment and prevention of wounds and pressure ulcers.

Chronic wounds have important repercussions in the patient's quality of life and cause a considerable increase in costs for the healthcare system, due to increased in-patient stays and costs for the materials for treatment and prophylaxis.

In a European study of 2001 (European Pressure Advisory Panel - EPUAP), in which Portugal has participated, it was shown, in our country, a rate of prevalence of pressure ulcers of 12.5% (Braden Scale), and a range from 8% to 23% in the European countries. Referring to the patient's age, its peak is in the group of 70-79, backing the need for risk assessment.

Since 2004, in Portugal, surveys have been made on the prevalence of pressure ulcers in 10 hospitals, on the issue of prevention.

The observed decrease in the prevalence was due to:

- risk assessment
- professional training
- epidemiological survey with feedback to the care teams

Wounds and pressure ulcers are a priority to the Portuguese General Directorate of Health, which intents are:

- To extend professional training to all care settings (hospitals, continuing care, primary care)
- To standardize scales for risk assessment and protection and treatment materials/devices
- To spread best practice guidelines
- To broaden epidemiological surveillance to all care settings

With quality of care and patient safety in mind, a working group has been gathered to address the task of issuing guidelines, training care teams and widen epidemiological surveillance with an on-line national record.