

WOUND RELATED PAIN: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON NURSING PRACTICE

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Aim: Nurses are the main professional group caring for people with wounds; their knowledge and attitudes are central to wound care that sensitively addresses issues of pain. An educational initiative aimed to raise the knowledge and practice of nurses at one hospital who had become deskilled in wound care, and compare resultant knowledge with nurses from across the region.

Methods: A questionnaire was used to determine nurses' management of wound related pain issues prior to, and four months after, an educational workshop - part of which considered pain issues. A different group of nurses attending a regional wound care study day, not related to pain issues, were given the same questionnaire. Study period: March to October 2007. Qualitative data was subject to thematic analysis.

Results: From the hospital studied, 72 nurses responded to the initial questionnaire, and 64 nurses completed the same questionnaire four months after the educational initiative; of these 39 had attended the workshop. A further 96 nurses from mixed clinical backgrounds attending a regional study day completed the same questionnaire. Four months after attending the workshop 18 nurses would review the dressing if a patient complained the last dressing change was painful (non-attendees: 8), or if a product had adhered to the wound bed, 16 (non-attendees: 5). In comparison, the frequency with which study day nurses would review the dressing if the last dressing change was painful was higher: 58, or a product had adhered to the wound bed: 60. These nurses had no education focused on wound related pain in 2007.

Discussion: In the region studied, wound care study days are a well attended annual event; studying a post-graduate tissue viability module is also popular. It is likely that a proportion of nurses at the regional study day had previously attended one of these educational opportunities which included detailed exploration of pain issues in wound care. The results appear to indicate that sensitive management of wound related pain has become embedded in the practice of these nurses.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that commitment to addressing issues of wound related pain through education does result in sustained change across a region. Four months may be too short to evaluate if a single workshop, where pain issues is only one component, is sufficient to sustain change in an organisation.