

IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPRESSION-THERAPY PROTOCOL FOR SERVICE USERS WITH A VENOUS ULCER

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Subject: Of all chronic wounds, VUs are the ones that account for the largest number of treatments carried out in the context of community health. In our institution's catchment area (183,439 service users), there is a prevalence of 1.6/1000 inhabitants. Care planning for VU service users must be based on available scientific evidence. This points to compression therapy as the most important aspect of venous ulcer treatment (H. Partsh, 2003). In Portugal, the use of compression therapy is a recent trend. The aims of this work were to implement a treatment protocol based on compression therapy and evaluate the impact of this protocol.

Methodology: This is a research/action project. The study was carried out from June to December 2007 on a sample of 53 service users with 76 wounds, with an average wound age of 2 years and 2 months. An action protocol based on compression therapy was used. The mean duration of treatment of the service users being studied was 74 days. The wounds were monitored using a digital wound measuring system and photographic records.

Results: 48.7% of ulcers healed as a result of implementing compression therapy in the care of our service users. The total initial surface area of the ulcers was 691.4 cm² (33 users had an initial surface area less than 5 cm², 20 between 50 and 10 cm², 11 between 10 and 30 cm², and 7 users with more than 30 cm²). By the end of the study, this area had dropped to 401.1 cm², thus increasing the healing rate to 58.01%.

Conclusions: Despite Portugal's limited experience in using compression therapy, the results have been very encouraging for pursuing the commitment to implementing it on a large scale.