

## AN EXPLORATION OF STAFF NURSES' KNOWLEDGE OF PRESSURE ULCER PREVENTION

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**Background:** Pressure ulcers are a significant health problem, impacting negatively on the individual's quality of life and compounding rising health care costs. It is argued that neither the prevalence nor incidence of the problem is reducing despite continued investment in the use of preventative equipment. Nurses have a unique role to play in pressure ulcer prevention; however, effective practice needs a good foundation in appropriate knowledge and skills. A previous Irish study identified that education and training in pressure ulcer prevention was sporadic, lacking consistency and not well availed of by nurses. The study did not explore whether this had an impact on actual knowledge. Therefore, in planning interventions for pressure ulcer prevention, it remained important to determine nurses' knowledge levels.

**Aim:** The aim of this study was to explore staff nurses' knowledge of pressure ulcer prevention.

**Design:** The research design was a quantitative descriptive, cross sectional survey design using a validated questionnaire as the data collection tool. Ethical approval was granted from the Local Research Ethics Committee.

**Analysis:** Data were analysed using SPSS, descriptive and inferential statistics were undertaken as appropriate.

**Results:** Nurses' (n=142) overall knowledge was found to be good. Interestingly, knowledge levels were not as good in relation to the less obvious contributory factors such as the use of sedation and the role of nutrition.

**Discussion:** In keeping with the international literature, nurses working in the Irish health care setting have good knowledge of most of the pertinent aspects of pressure ulcer prevention. Successful pressure ulcer prevention is dependent on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the staff involved in this aspect of patient care. It appears that there may be barriers that exist which impede the transfer of knowledge and attitudes into effective pressure ulcer prevention and this warrants further exploration.

**Conclusion:** Nurses knowledge of pressure ulcer prevention was found to be good suggesting that there are other contributory factors that influence pressure rates. It would be of value to explore actual care delivery in pressure ulcer prevention to determine target areas in planning prevention strategies.