

PRESS RELEASE

NICE relieves the pressure: launch of clinical guideline on the use of pressure-relieving devices for the prevention of pressure ulcers

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today issued a clinical guideline on pressure ulcer risk management and prevention, including the use of pressure-relieving devices, for the prevention of pressure ulcers in primary and secondary care within the NHS in England and Wales. Today's guideline, which incorporates the existing NICE clinical guideline on pressure ulcer risk assessment and prevention first published in 2001, outlines best practice for health professionals caring for individuals who are vulnerable to or at risk of developing pressure ulcers.

Professor Peter Littlejohns, Clinical Director and Executive Lead, said:

“Pressure ulcers really impact on the quality of life for both patients and their carers – they occur in as many as 4-10% of patients admitted to a UK district general hospital and the financial cost to the NHS of treating them may be as high as £750 million per year. Today's guidance provides healthcare professionals and carers with information on the best tools and methods to prevent and treat pressure ulcers.”

The guideline aims to reduce the occurrence of pressure ulcers by providing guidance on the early identification of at risk patients, the provision of preventive interventions and by identifying practice that may be harmful or ineffective. The guideline also makes recommendations on what types of pressure relieving devices (beds, mattresses and overlays) are the most appropriate for a given situation, based on an overall assessment of the patient.

The guideline includes recommendations for the following:

- Identifying patients vulnerable to or at elevated risk of developing pressure ulcers
- Holistic assessment – which should include assessment of the skin, comfort, lifestyle and abilities and critical care needs.
- Minimum provisions for individuals vulnerable to pressure ulcers.
- Use of alternating pressure mattresses and high-tech pressure-relieving systems for individuals with an elevated risk or developing pressure ulcers.
- Minimum provisions for individuals undergoing surgery.
- The 24-hour approach to provision of care.
- Assessment of support surfaces.
- Management of patients in sitting positions.
- The pressure ulcer reduction strategy - which should incorporate a coordinated approach to the acquisition, allocation and management of pressure relieving equipment.
- Education of healthcare professionals, carers and individuals vulnerable to or at elevated risk of developing pressure ulcers.

Liz McInnes, Acting Director of the National Collaborating Centre for Nursing & Supportive Care, which developed this guideline on behalf of NICE, said ” We welcome the publication of guidelines that are based on the best available evidence and put people vulnerable to developing pressure ulcers at the centre of care. We are particularly pleased that the guideline highlights the need for patients and clinicians to work together in a constructive partnership to ensure the best possible care of the patient. An important aspect of this, and one which the guideline focuses on, is the need for education of healthcare professionals, carers and individuals vulnerable to or at elevated risk of developing pressure ulcers so that those risks can be assessed and the appropriate preventative measures adopted.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

Full guideline

The full guideline can be found on the NICE web site at:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/Docref.asp?d=89897>

The full guideline includes information on how the evidence was collected, reviewed and assessed, a description of how the recommendations were formulated and graded and full reference details of the literature in the evidence base.

About NICE

1. NICE is part of the NHS. It is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on treatments and care for those using the NHS in England and Wales. Its guidance is for healthcare professionals and patients and their carers to help them make decisions about treatment and healthcare. For further information about NICE you can visit www.nice.org.uk.
2. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS in England and Wales – technology appraisals
 - the appropriate treatment and care of patients with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS in England and Wales – clinical guidelines.
 - whether interventional procedures used for diagnosis or treatment are safe enough and work well enough for routine use– interventional procedures.
3. NICE also funds three enquiries that undertake research into the way patients are treated to identify ways of improving the quality of care (the investigations are known as confidential enquiries).
4. NICE guidance and recommendations are prepared by independent groups that include professionals working in the NHS and people who are familiar with the issues affecting patients and carers.

About clinical guidelines

5. Clinical guidelines are recommendations on the appropriate treatment and care of patients with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS in England and Wales. They sit alongside, but do not replace, the knowledge and skills of experienced health professionals.
6. NICE clinical guidelines are developed by independent groups - National Collaborating Centres - that include healthcare professionals working in the NHS, patients and people who are familiar with the issues affecting patients and carers. Professional and patient/carer groups whose members are likely to be affected by the guideline are able to submit information and comment on the recommendations before they are finalised.
7. For details of NICE clinical guidelines currently in development, log on to the website at <http://www.nice.org.uk/catcg1.asp?c=20055>.

About the pressure-relieving devices guideline

8. The National Collaborating Centre for Nursing & Supportive Care is based at the Royal College of Nursing. The following partners have member status on the partners board of the centre:

- Royal College of Nursing Institute
- College of Health
- UK Cochrane Centre
- Centre for Statistics in Medicine, Institute of Health Sciences, Oxford
- Clinical Effectiveness Forum for Allied Health Professionals
- Centre for Evidence Based Nursing, University of York
- Health Economics Research Centre, University of Oxford
- University of Oxford Library Services, Health Care Libraries

9. Local health communities should review their existing service provision for people who are vulnerable or at elevated risk of developing pressure ulcers against this guideline as they begin the development of their Local Delivery Plans. The review should consider the resources required to implement fully the recommendations set out in Section 1 of the guideline, the people and processes involved, and the timeline over which full implementation is envisaged.