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Challenges facing tissue viability in 2010

Tissue viability is a speciality that truly encompasses the holistic needs of individuals with a wound. As practitioners involved in tissue viability it is not just the wound that requires assessment, treatment and prevention strategies, but also the assessment of nutrition, pain, stress, mobility, altered body image and any underlying disease process prior to choosing the most appropriate dressing and pressure-redistributing devices. Additionally, tissue viability practitioners are expected to develop business cases to support the speciality, and to liaise with members of the multidisciplinary team who are involved in the care of the patient. Although tissue viability tends to be nurse-led, there are numerous professional groups that will also be involved in this care, including healthcare assistants, podiatrists, physiotherapists, medical staff, occupational therapists and dieticians. It is therefore important that all those involved in tissue viability understand the importance of the quality agenda that will affect their day to day delivery of care.

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) (2010) announced plans to reduce levels of harm in ten high risk safety areas, and included in these is reducing pressure ulcers. The NPSA state that correct patient position, adequate nutrition and hydration, and effective monitoring and assessment are recognized as being vital to the prevention of pressure ulcers. The Department of Health (DH) (2008; 2009a) has already highlighted the importance of developing and maintaining quality with reference to the reduction and eradication of hospital-acquired pressure ulcers. Indeed the DH (2009a) had previously remarked that the majority of pressure ulcers are preventable through effective risk assessment and the implementation of pressure-reducing activities, such as moving immobile patients. The DH (2009a) have an ambition to eliminate all avoidable pressure ulcers in NHS-provided care that, they claim, will significantly affect their day to day delivery of care.

As practitioners involved in tissue viability it is our responsibility to understand the importance of the quality agenda that will affect our day to day delivery of care. As practitioners involved in tissue viability it is our responsibility to understand the importance of the quality agenda that will affect our day to day delivery of care.

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High Impact Actions for Nursing and Midwifery: SHA Chief Nurses in collaboration with the Royal College of Midwives, the Royal College of Nursing, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, the Department of Health, November 2009, www.institute.nhs.uk/building_capability/general/anns (accessed 2 June 2010)