Pressure ulcers remain a major health problem. They occur in all healthcare settings and can affect individuals that are subjected to prolonged pressure and/or shear. In a recently developed risk assessment framework, factors such as immobility, the presence of a pressure ulcer and skin status, perfusion, diabetes, skin moisture, sensory perception and nutrition were defined as key factors increasing an individual’s risk of developing a pressure ulcer (Coleman et al., 2014). Prevalence ranges between 8.8% and 29.9% in nursing homes and between 7.3% and 23% in hospitals throughout Europe and North- America (Beeckman et al., 2012).

It is unnecessary to reiterate that pressure ulcers have a profound impact on the overall wellbeing of patients and their environment. Pain, a changed body image, increased immobility, discomfort, the loss of independence and the loss of self-control are reported frequently. Pain contributes to sleep disturbance, negatively impacts mood, and creates feelings of anxiety. Emotions such as powerlessness, worrying, depression and worthlessness are described by patients. Pressure ulcers may lead to serious complications, prolonged hospitalisation, and even death. To summarise, the presence of a pressure ulcer significantly interferes with daily living activities and social life (Gorecki et al., 2014).

The consensus is that the majority of pressure ulcers are preventable and can be avoided through simple interventions by frontline healthcare staff, patients, and their carers. Although pressure ulcer development is now generally considered as an indicator for quality of nursing care, questions and concerns about situations in which they are unavoidable remain (Black et al., 2011). Preventing pressure ulcers involves two major steps: first, identifying patients at risk; and second, reliably implementing prevention strategies for all patients who are identified as being at risk. Awareness about the significance of the problem, positive attitudes towards prevention and an adequate level of knowledge are cornerstones to effectively prevent pressure ulcers (Beeckman et al., 2011).

Many efforts are made and good initiatives are developed at local, national and international level to increase awareness, positive attitudes and knowledge. In September 2014, the European and US National Pressure Ulcer Advisory panels (EPUAP and NPUAP), along with the Pan Pacific Pressure Injury Alliance (PPPIA) announced the release of their latest International Pressure Ulcer Guidelines. A comprehensive literature review was conducted on pressure ulcer prevention and treatment. A rigorous scientific methodology was used to appraise available research and make evidence-based recommendations. Draft guidelines were made available to 986 invited stakeholder individuals and organisations/societies and stakeholder feedback was considered by the guideline developers. The guideline is now available and all information can be found on the respective websites. This guideline is again a major step forward for practice. However, we know that there is often a gap between the development of guidelines and their implementation into practice. Just as guidelines themselves help provide a bridge between research and practice, one specific chapter in the guideline outlines the strategies that can assist practitioners, and health services to bridge the gap between guideline development and implementation.

In recent years we have seen ‘Stop Pressure Ulcer Days’ occurring in Spanish-speaking countries and in 2011 these organizations created a Declaration in Rio speaking out against people developing pressure ulcers. In 2014 there will again be a Stop Pressure Ulcer Day to be held on November 20th 2014. The slogan for this year is: ‘More activities result in more benefits for patients’. EPUAP applauds the efforts of such events to bring pressure ulcers to the public, the professionals and our politicians. EPUAP has once again decided to join the Stop Pressure Ulcer Day to help publicise pressure ulcers. The international pressure ulcer community invites all healthcare professionals on this day to create public and professional awareness of this major health problem. Examples of effective initiatives from previous editions include:

- The development of posters to promote the Stop Pressure Ulcer Day,
- The development of a fact sheet on pressure ulcers and a guide to pressure ulcers for patients, their families and carers
- The production of a short video on the importance of pressure ulcers
- Organising press conferences,
- The organisation of local and national symposia
- Talks with leading politicians in health care
- Hands-on trainings for frontline healthcare staff
- Television campaigns.

You are warmly invited to share this year’s efforts with us through our website (http://www.epuap.org).

To conclude, we truly believe that increasing awareness and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration is needed for this important patient safety issue. Therefore, we invite you to take a leading role in this year’s Stop Pressure Ulcer Day. On behalf of all patients, their families and the thousands of professionals daily caring for them: many thanks.


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