

Using technology to reduce pressure ulcers

Staff at ULHT have continued in their commitment to reduce avoidable pressure ulcers in our hospitals.

PUNT (Pressure Ulcer Notification Tool), is our unique online system that allows staff to record, monitor, report and review reliable pressure ulcer data for hospital patients.

Originally launched in 2004 and developed with support from the Trust's IT team, PUNT has allowed the Trust to objectively report a decrease in the incidence of all categories of pressure ulcers, especially since its further redevelopment in 2011.

The tool has also attracted international interest from Californian based company Bruin Biometrics (BBI), a developer of innovative sensor-based diagnostic equipment.

The company has developed a hand-held, portable device that detects early signs of pressure damage, including pressure ulcers and deep tissue injuries, before visual skin damage or pressure ulcer formation can be seen on or within a patient's skin. They will use the PUNT tool in line with these devices to report and review reliable pressure ulcer data and plan to develop it for use by any hospital or community service in the UK.

Earlier this year Mark Collier, Tissue Viability Nurse Consultant, was named Pressure Care Nurse of the Year at The British Journal of Nursing Awards in recognition for the development of PUNT.

Pressure ulcers

Pressure ulcers can range in severity from patches of discoloured skin to open wounds that expose the underlying bone or muscle. They affect patients health, can result in pain and lead to longer hospital stays.

Due to the type of patients we treat, it is difficult to completely eliminate pressure ulcers, but good nursing care, combined with reliable data and great technology helps us to avoid skin damage where possible.

The results

As a result of introducing PUNT, the Trust has reduced the incidence of pressure ulcers to as low as 0.9% compared with a national rate of between 4-6%. Pressure ulcer rates currently stand at 1.5% for all categories of pressure ulcer, with the majority being the less serious stage 1 and 2 pressure sores.

The quality of patient care has improved since the implementation of PUNT:

- Improved skin assessment and the patient's relevant personal care needs.
- The tool includes data about where patients were admitted from – home, nursing home, internal trust transfer or other hospital - which helps to inform the local clinical



Mark Collier, Nurse Consultant, Tissue Viability, ULHT (second from right) accepting his British Journal of Nursing Award.

commissioning groups and other community care settings of potential 'hot spots' or areas that might need further support.

- Previous significant ulcers (category 3 and 4) are always highlighted when a patient record is retrieved.

The next steps

Our plans are to make PUNT more widely available with the development of a mobile phone app. This will ensure pressure ulcer data can be easily reported and accessed by both hospitals and community services, and shared and compared across trusts.