

Multidisciplinary pressure management for the complex client

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Summary

Pressure ulcers can be difficult to manage for multiple reasons. Foremost is an inability to offload pressure from risk areas, often due to postural asymmetries or joint limitations, but also lack of awareness, strength or control. The presentation shares recent experiences from the Pressure Ulcer Prevention and Intervention Service (PUPIS) team where such stubborn pressure ulcers have required a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach, bespoke solutions and a holistic, co-productive approach to facilitate effective ongoing pressure management care.

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this presentation is to share recent experiences with complex case studies from the MDT working with the PUPIS service and surrounding services. The presentation reflects on what causes complexities in pressure ulcer management, and reinforces the principles of co-working and holistic assessment.

Background

Many pressure ulcers resolve themselves with standard measures, local management and basic equipment. However, there are others that are stubborn with more complex scenarios, requiring multidisciplinary support and sometimes bespoke equipment.

For example:

When providing postural and pressure management through a seating system, contractures of lower limbs can result in complications when sitting a client. These clients are often confined to bed due to pressure ulcers to ischial tuberosity, sacrum, hips or heels. Whilst in bed, it can become increasingly difficult for them to complete a repositioning regime, affecting communication, digestive and respiratory functions. The use of custom-moulded seating in a wheelchair, combined with medical management of contractures, has allowed a number of our clients to sit out, regaining communication skills and providing the ability to partake in daily activities.

The importance of education and engagement is essential to ensure clients are aware of risks and rationale for equipment. In providing bespoke equipment it is particularly important to involve the client in the design process to promote effectiveness of solution, and ongoing compliance.

Clients with complex spinal deformities are at high risk of pressure ulcer development and it is essential for these vulnerable areas to be protected. This is particularly challenging for ambulant or otherwise mobile young people who contact with a variety of surfaces. A new pathway has seen PUPIS working alongside a paediatric plastic surgeon, supporting local services and developing personal pressure protecting equipment as a strategy to limit ongoing breakdown and avoid plastic surgery.

Closer working with a range of professionals including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, clinical scientists, rehabilitation engineers and consultants in both rehabilitation medicine and plastic surgery has allowed more effective solutions to be achieved.

Discussion

Standard solutions are often not suitable for clients with complex postures, and modified or bespoke solutions are often required. Care-givers and health professionals must consider all aspects of function and daily living, within a co-productive and holistic approach, to ensure equipment and offloading regimes are suitable for the client. PUPIS supports local services to achieve positive outcomes for these clients. The ability to manufacture bespoke equipment and to call on a breadth of expertise from those working with complex posture, helps provide alternative solutions for the management of complex pressure ulcers.

Through sharing of experiences and learning from others in the field, we hope to progress our practice, and to more effectively support those clients who call for us to explore beyond our standard box of tools.

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