

Under Pressure! Can a Protective Dressing Help Prevent Pressure Ulcers in Critical Care?

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Purpose: The purpose of this performance improvement project was to evaluate the use of a soft silicone bordered dressing for the prevention of sacrococcygeal pressure ulcers in the adult critical care population.

Background: Pressure ulcers can result in pain and suffering for the patient, increased length of stay, and increased cost for the facility. Current practice at our facility is offloading, upgraded mattresses in critical care, skin protectant cream and the management of moisture, friction and shear through the use of a pressure ulcer prevention care plan. A review of the charts showed that a total of 10 sacrococcygeal pressure ulcers developed in three critical care units in 2010. Out of those ten, five were suspected deep tissue injuries.

Methods: During the three month project, critical care patients were assessed for high risk of pressure ulcer development using a patient selection criteria worksheet. If the patient was determined to be at high risk, a soft-silicone bordered dressing was placed on the sacrococcygeal area. The skin could be assessed daily and the dressing changed every three days.

Results: During the three month project 140 patients were assessed as high risk and the dressing was placed. No sacrococcygeal pressure ulcers developed on any of these patients. Two hospital acquired pressure ulcers (HAPU's) developed in critical care during this period. The first ulcer developed on a patient who did not get assessed. The second developed on a patient with a preexisting pressure ulcer where an alternative treatment was ordered.

Discussion: The dressing protected the fragile sacrococcygeal area. Skin assessments showed dry, intact skin without erythema even on this high risk population.

Conclusion: Implications for the future at our facility include continuing the use of this dressing for prevention in critical care. Criteria will be developed for the use of this dressing on selected patients in the step-down and medical/surgical units. This product will also be looked at to help prevent device related pressure ulcers.