Guest Editorial

A Timely and Timeless Event

Catherine R. Ratliff, PhD, APRN-BC, CWOCN
Education Chair of the NPUAP

The National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel (NPUAP) is an independent, not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to promoting evidenced-based care for pressure ulcers. Formed in 1987, the NPUAP is composed of a multidisciplinary team of pressure ulcer experts from a variety of healthcare disciplines who share a commitment to pressure ulcer prevention and care. Every 2 years since 1989, the NPUAP has held a consensus conference to enhance awareness of the scope and weight of the pressure ulcer problem and to discuss timely relevant issues.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the NPUAP consensus conference and the 20th anniversary of the NPUAP. Two conferences are being held simultaneously. The first conference will present best-practice issues related to pressure ulcer care. Topics include staging, care of specific pressure ulcers (eg, heel ulcers), and care of specific patient populations (bariatric, critical care, palliative, spinal cord injured, and pediatric), along with information on documenting pressure ulcers (including measurement and photographs), coding, and pressure ulcer pain management. This valuable conference will provide many clinical pearls that healthcare professionals can put into practice at their institutions.

The second conference is a consensus conference. The purpose of a consensus conference is to facilitate informed debate on a topic. This particular gathering will address the staging system and whether deep tissue injury fits with current staging methods, as well as how to make the staging system more precise. In addition, updates on the efforts of the NPUAP support surface initiative, which most recently developed terms and definitions related to support surfaces, will be presented.

I share information of the NPUAP conference to underscore the importance of providing evidence-based pressure ulcer care. Often considered preventable, sentinel events, pressure ulcers have been garnering attention from all facets of society: regulatory agencies anxious to control costs by increasing “guidance,” professionals eager to provide (or delegate provision of) appropriate care, and patients seeking ways to avoid succumbing to the insidious forces that besiege them from within and without. Hence, no one can ever know “too much” about pressure ulcers. Theories and ideas have changed throughout the history of the NPUAP and its conferences but the NPUAP message remains clear: research and practice must continue to come together to discover, document, and deliver evidence-based approaches to dealing with pressure ulcers to decrease their prevalence and incidence and lessen their severity once they develop.

Through oversight of its interactive educational programs, public policy involvement, and research initiatives, the NPUAP will continue to incorporate the latest information on pressure ulcers into such efforts as updating staging systems and developing support surface utilization guidelines. Clinicians must not remain idle — they need to nurture these endeavors by attending conferences, documenting prevalence and incidence, and sharing knowledge by participating in and publishing research. They need especially to champion the cause of prevention. The course charted by the NPUAP will be effective only if practitioners stay that course and prepare to handle the next generation of potential pressure ulcer patients.

The articles in this issue of OWM reflect the growing need to assess and document pressure ulcer

This article was not subject to the Ostomy Wound Management peer-review process.
occurrence, a problem that spans geographic and medical settings across the globe. The articles from Timmerman and Uzun add insight to pressure ulcer issues in Canada and Turkey and highlight the importance of implementing pressure ulcer prevention/management programs. Aronovitch examines pressure ulcer risk factors inherent in the surgical arena. McNees discusses the healing patterns of pressure ulcers and other chronic wounds in patients with cancer. The more clinicians discover about pressure ulcer prevalence and incidence, the better equipped we are to address related concerns.

Pressure ulcers may not be preventable in all cases. But pressure ulcer care can be improved. Whether you attend the conference or obtain presentation materials and information in this and other publications, there has never been a better time to increase your pressure ulcer IQ or a better way to save your skin in every sense of the phrase. - OWM