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Pressure area care: an exploration of Greek nurses' knowledge and practice

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Pressure area care: an exploration of Greek nurses' knowledge and practice

Background. Despite a plethora of information on the prevention of pressure sores, they remain a significant problem in both hospital and community settings. The need to reduce the incidence of pressure sores has been well documented; unfortunately there is little evidence to suggest improvement. The reasons for this lack of improvement have been explored, but the picture remains unclear. While some studies have suggested that nurses have the appropriate knowledge to prevent pressure sores developing (but do not use their knowledge), others suggest that nurses' knowledge of preventive strategies is deficient. In Greece, similarly to the United Kingdom (UK), the incidence of pressure sores is high. There is currently no evidence on Greek nurses' knowledge and practice and therefore no baseline on which to build, in terms of improving practice.

Aim. The purpose of this study was to explore Greek nurses' knowledge of 'risk factors', 'areas at risk' and 'recommended preventive strategies' in relation to pressure area care. In addition, information was sought on nurses' 'current preventive practice' and any barriers to 'good practice'.

Research methods. The study was exploratory and descriptive, adopting a cross-sectional survey approach. The sample was drawn from the population of nurses working in a military hospital near Athens. The data were collected over a 4-week period in June 2000, using a self-completed questionnaire.

Results. Although the knowledge-base of many of the nurses was good in relation to 'risk factors' and 'areas at risk', a significant proportion were unaware that methods such as 'massage' and 'donuts' are no longer recommended. This lack of knowledge influenced practice with these methods commonly being used. In relation to barriers to good practice, a significant proportion of nurses reported that they could not access, read or understand research findings. This has obvious implications for the implementation of evidence-based practice.

Conclusion. The results of this study suggest that the knowledge and practice of participants could be improved. It is of particular concern that methods known to be detrimental were in common use. Finally, there is a need to improve the research skills of Greek nurses in order to provide them with the appropriate knowledge to use research findings.