

National Wound Care Strategy update: online education resources for all



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When I look back at my own pre-registration education (admittedly a long time ago) I can remember very little that related to wound care. We were taught how to do an aseptic technique (and assessed on every placement) and had a glorious afternoon when we were left to play with a huge box of bandages, but that was about it.

This meant I was completely unprepared for the patient I met in my first week as a community nurse who had appalling leg ulcers. I had no idea this condition existed and no idea what care was needed. More worryingly, none of my nursing or medical colleagues did either. She was admitted and died of sepsis a week later.

Many years later, I became a nurse tutor and discovered that things had not changed much. The undergraduate nursing programme contained almost nothing on wound care, apart from a session on pressure ulcers (PU). I suspect things were very similar in other pre-registration nursing programmes as we received very few responses when we undertook a survey of the provision of wound care education in British universities.

So, we appear to have a qualified nursing workforce with mostly low levels of wound care knowledge and skills and student nurses who still seem to receive very little education about caring for people with wounds. As wound care is seen primarily as a nursing issue, we cannot lean on our medical or AHP colleagues for support as they probably receive even less wound care education than nurses.

Early in the National Wound Care Strategy Programme (NWCSP) we realised that we had to do something fast to skill up the NHS workforce to manage the huge burden of wound care. Although some health professionals were accessing education from wound product suppliers, we felt it was wrong to expect suppliers to educate our own workforce. With this in mind, and working with Health Education England, we decided to develop a comprehensive suite of free-to-access, online

education resources suitable for all health or care professionals who look after people with wounds (<https://www.nationalwoundcarestrategy.net/education-and-workforce/>).

We developed a capability framework with three levels of capabilities:

- ▶ Tier 1: Capabilities that require a general knowledge and understanding of wound care and the skills which support the provision of that care (for any health or care professional who provides care to someone with a wound)
- ▶ Tier 2: Capabilities that enable the provision of wound care independently and with a degree of critical analysis (for those who provide care in a dedicated wound care service or whose caseload has a significant proportion of wound care)
- ▶ Tier 3: Capabilities that require a high degree of autonomy and complex decision making, an ability to lead wound care practice, enabling innovative solutions to enhance people's experience and improve outcomes. (for those who provide specialist input for highly complex wound care).

Our priority has been to develop education resources that support the development of Tier 1 knowledge and skill, to improve the knowledge base of the largest number of health and care professionals. Our Tier 1 'Essentials of Wound care' suite offers six different topics, and further resource will be added to this, including a simulation based game. We have started a catalogue of Tier 2 resources, which will continue to grow over the next few years. The Tier 2 resources will be supplemented with a lower limb curriculum for those providing lower limb wound care in either a dedicated lower limb wound care service or as a significant part of their workload. Tier 3 education is already available through the many universities that offer post-graduate wound care education.

We recognise that online education cannot completely substitute for hands-on, face-to-face education. For example, it is not appropriate to try to teach the practical skills of compression



bandaging or how to measure an ABPI using a handheld device through an online resource. However, our hope is that these resources will provide a high-quality bedrock on which to build further education opportunities.

Both the capability document and the online resources have already been downloaded many times and the feedback is extraordinarily positive. While this is encouraging, we are aware that thousands more patients would benefit, if their health and care professionals used the NWCSP resources to improve their knowledge and skills.

The NWCSP is now developing strategies to raise awareness of the NWCSP education resources, particularly to universities that offer

pre-registration clinical education. These resources would have been an absolute gift to me when I was teaching student nurses about wound care, whether in the classroom or when they were with me on a district nursing placement. I could have said "Right, we are off to see Mrs Jones tomorrow who is at risk of pressure ulcers. Why don't you log onto the NWCSP resources to learn a bit about pressure ulcers before we go and see her?" Or I could have signposted my GP colleagues, who confessed they didn't really know much about leg ulcers, to the relevant resource.

Can you help us spread the word?

WUK

This programme is in partnership with...

Tier 1 essentials

- **Essentials of Skin Care** – Skin anatomy, function and assessment.
- **Essentials of Wound Assessment** – Different types of wounds and undertaking a wound assessment.
- **Essentials of Leg Ulceration** – Causes of leg ulceration, types of leg ulceration and their management.
- **Essentials of the Foot at Risk** – Anatomy of the foot, undertaking a simple foot assessment and making appropriate referrals.
- **Essentials of Digital Wound Imaging** – The principles of taking a good quality digital image, including consent and data storage considerations.
- **Essentials of Pressure Ulcer Prevention** – Using the aSSKING framework to assess and manage identified risk of pressure area breakdown.

The NWCSP resources available at <https://www.nationalwoundcarestrategy.net/education-and-workforce/>