

The important thing is to not stop questioning



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Education seems to be high on everyone's agenda, as we are starting to plan our year in terms of conferences and events — yet there seem to be more conferences and events than ever before. In addition to the yearly conferences and events from Wounds UK and the Tissue Viability Society, for example, this year will see a massive upsurge in wound care companies running their own conferences, events and programmes. In part this relates to the changes in the EUCOMED code. The ruling seems a little strange: it prohibits companies from providing direct sponsorships for clinicians to attend independently organised events, such as Harrogate, in case it may sway or bias clinicians' decision making. Yet it doesn't stop companies from running their own events, where the content could be purely commercially focussed and delivered by company representatives. Surely these events are more likely to be biased than the independent one?

It is, however, difficult to run a truly independent event. Even the smallest study day usually relies on a commercial sponsor to help fund the proceedings or speakers. Bigger events, such as Harrogate, may display posters that are commercially focussed as well as run clearly labelled sponsored symposia alongside the rest of the programme. To be clear, not all company-sponsored sessions are biased — to state that would be saying that many of the excellent speakers have in some way been swayed to toe the party line. Removing the element of sponsorship from an event is just not realistic.

MAKING HEADWAY

In addition to the usual conferences, we seem to be inundated with meetings and working groups as the National Strategy Programme starts to gain momentum. The three clinical streams (Pressure Ulcers, Lower Limb and Surgical Wounds) have all met and put together a plan of work and the Enabling work streams including Data, Research, Education and Workforce have devised a way how to support the clinical streams. The biggest group are the Stakeholders. They have recruited many clinicians,

commercial companies and patients to help support and underpin the rest of the work. It's a time of great excitement, it feels like finally there is some traction and huge efforts are being put in to trying to standardise care, develop pathways, review and implement evidence. This is great news, especially for those who work single-handedly or only have small teams. Keeping on top of everything is always a challenge.

As part of the collaborative work we are doing in the Stop the Pressure programme, I get to visit many different organisations, which is a great privilege, and have them tell/show me what they are doing to help prevent pressure ulcers. The creativity, enthusiasm, team working and innovation that I see on a regular basis never ceases to amaze me: from TVNs challenging the wisdom of 30-degree tilts (which no one does properly as there are never enough pillows, so patients are never comfortable, therefore turning back to their previous positions) and coming up with a much more workable alternative (thanks University Hospital Birmingham) to Plaster Technicians, who are really taking the challenge of pressure ulcers under Plaster of Paris by the 'horns' and doing great work developing staff and patient resources (thumbs up Southport and Ormskirk Trust), there is so much fabulous work happening. I really love seeing front-line clinicians starting to challenge conventional wisdom, seeking out evidence and, when they can't find it, starting to create the evidence. This is so positive to see, and I am humbled on a regular basis by how far above and beyond clinical staff go to prevent their patients suffering harm.

So now we have just got the pressure ulcer quality audit to undertake, we will be taking a large sample of acute trusts and, instead of just counting their pressure ulcers, looking at the processes behind that: checking for quality of care, mapping it against existing standards and looking for areas where quality improvements can be made. Initially it's only acute trusts but if you want to participate or know more about it don't hesitate to contact me. 