

Improving wound care awareness and skills in a mental health and learning disability Trust with the introduction of a Wound Resource Education Nurse programme (WREN)

Introduction

People with mental illness are reported to die several years prematurely when compared to the general population (Parani 2020). People with serious mental illnesses generally have poor health status with the prevalence of chronic physical illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease reported as higher in people with mental health illnesses, putting them at increased risk of developing skin wounds. The types of wounds seen in mental health settings often vary in means of aetiology. Pegram and Bloomfield (2010) suggest that mental health clinicians may need to attend to burns, self-harm injuries, venous leg ulcers, and abscesses related to intravenous drug use. Common wounds in mental health service users have also been recognised by Kilroy-Findley (2006) as: pressure ulcers, leg ulcers, partial thickness burns, ulcerated injection sites, diabetic foot ulcers, skin tears, trauma injuries, self-harm wounds, and pre-tibial lacerations. Due to the frequency of tissue viability issues in mental health settings Hemmingway et al (2013) recognise the importance that staff working in these areas should have the skills and competencies to assess, treat and prevent wound related issues. Tissue Viability Services within mental health and learning disabilities are still a growing speciality within dedicated organisations. Prior to the recent appointment of a dedicated TVN service in the trust, the Mental Health Trust had a service level agreement with the Acute Hospital Trust for the provision of specialised tissue viability services. During this time mental health trust staff had been able to attend an education programme delivered by the local NHS Hospital Foundation Trust Tissue Viability Team providing education to community, acute and mental health clinicians from varying disciplines and organisations. This programme had been a success with over 80 staff enrolling with cost savings, improvement in practice and care being evidenced (Renwick 2020).

Despite the success of the programme 4 years ago, changes to the service level agreement for wound care and the introduction of a specialist TVN role internally within the trust had seen the removal of this initiative. With the positive successes from the previous programme already evidenced, the TVN lead re-established a new WREN programme with content redesigned specifically for mental health and learning disability staff, dealing with the unique needs of their service users.

Aim/Method

Trust staff were invited to join 6 sessions taught across 3 full days internal training, on a variety of wound related topics relevant to the clinical area of practice. The training was delivered mostly by the Tissue Viability Nurse Specialist with some support and involvement from representatives from relevant wound management companies in 2 of the 6 sessions.

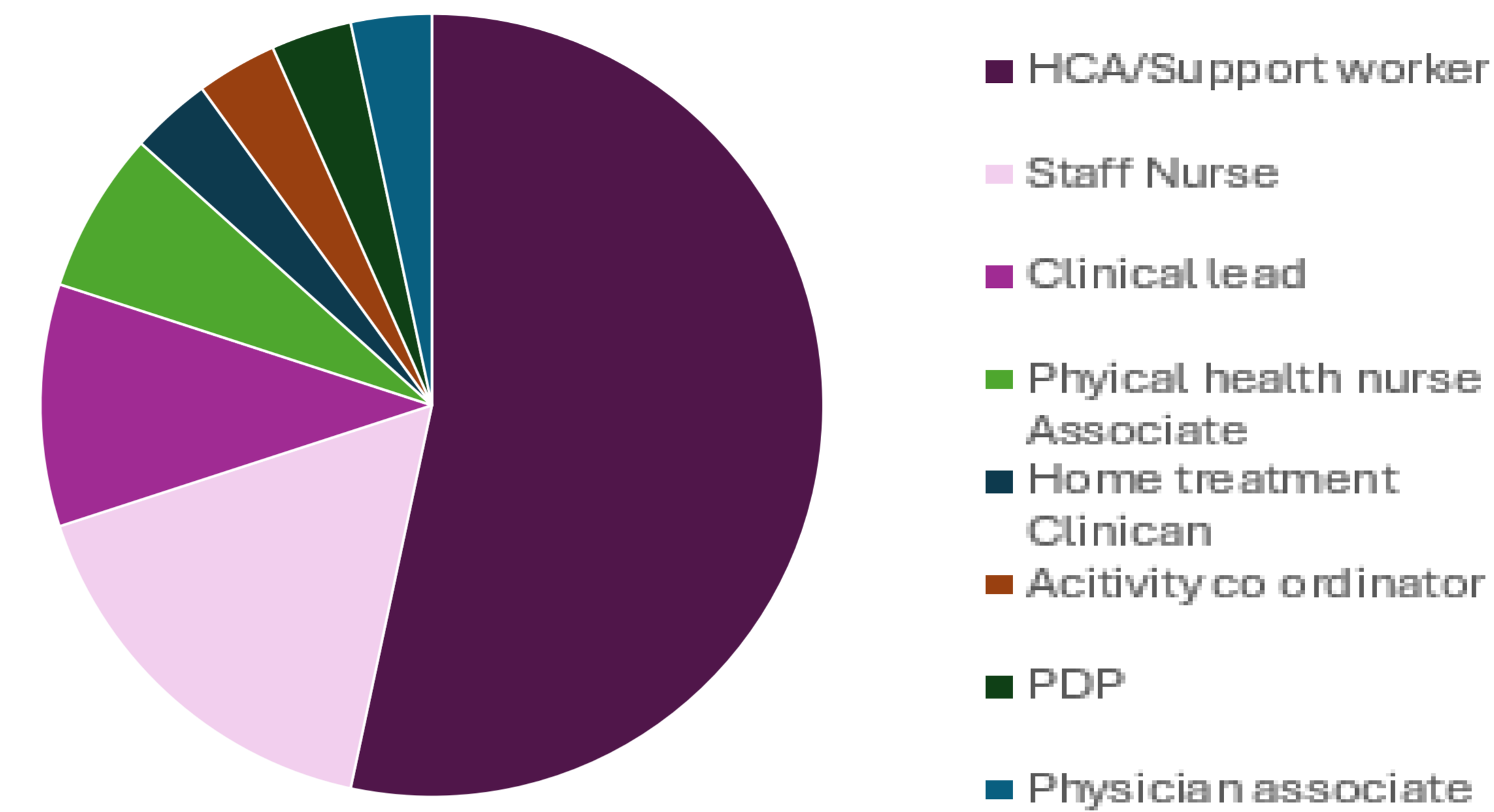


The sessions are delivered on a recurring timetable to help ensure attendance at all sessions, apart from the initial introduction modules the sessions were designed to be completed as single modules to aid completion of all 6 at a time to best suit the busy nature of the attendees. The programme was open to all health professionals, including support staff who were providing face to face patient care and were wanting to develop their tissue viability knowledge and skills. Sessions were delivered one day a month, over a 3-month period, with varying teaching styles being used to enhance engagement such as practical skills sessions, case-based scenarios and group work. Learning is assessed through quizzes and practical assessments at the end of each session and at course completion.

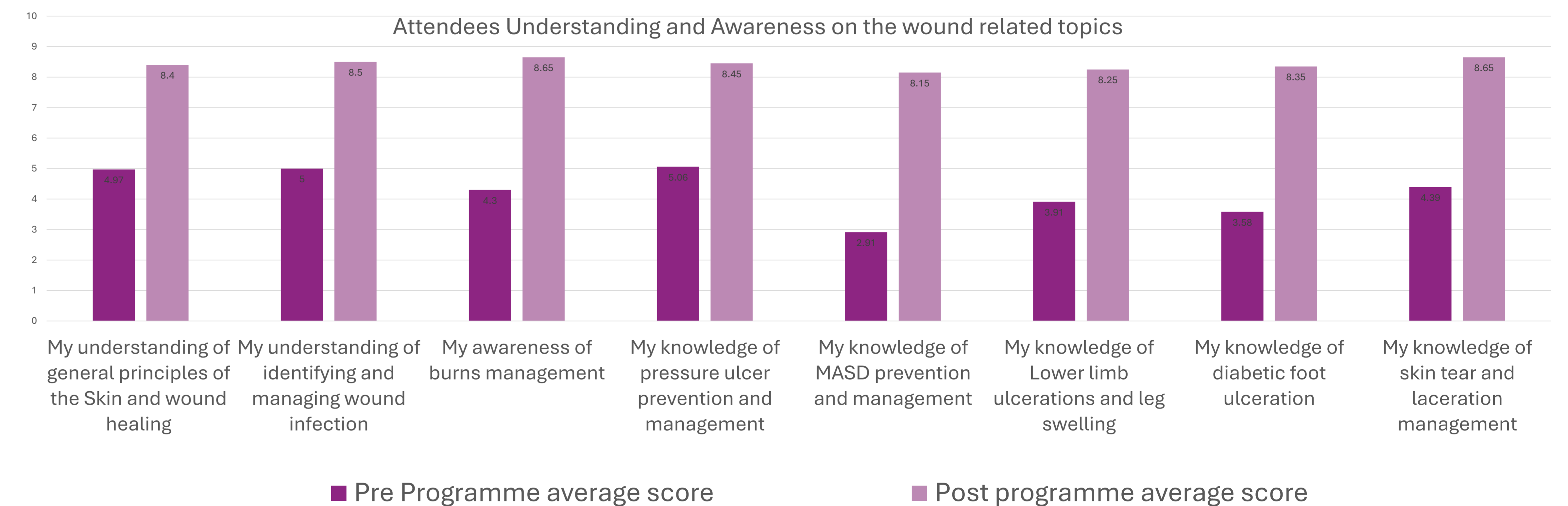
Prior to the commencement of the programme staff were asked to rate their level of knowledge and confidence relating to each topic on a scale of 0-10 via an electronic self-assessment questionnaire. The scale for answers advised 10 being the highest confidence score, 5 being an average confidence score, and 1 being the lowest or no confidence score. Following the completion of the programme they were asked to repeat the self-assessment questionnaire. Results would then be compared to show whether any improvement in staff knowledge and confidence had been made.

Results

The workshop was attended by 24 staff. All participants completed the questionnaire prior to the workshop; 20 completed the questionnaire after the workshop. The largest proportion of the attendees were working in Healthcare support roles.



Topic	Pre-Programme average score	Post programme average score
My understanding of general principles of the Skin and wound healing	4.97	8.4
My understanding of identifying and managing wound infection	5	8.5
My awareness of burns management	4.3	8.65
My knowledge of pressure ulcer prevention and management	5.06	8.45
My knowledge of MASD prevention and management	2.91	8.15
My knowledge of Lower limb ulcerations and leg swelling	3.91	8.25
My knowledge of diabetic foot ulceration	3.58	8.35
My knowledge of skin tear and laceration management	4.39	8.65



Conclusion and discussion

At first glance based on the self-assessment questionnaires the introduction of the WREN educational programme has been a success in increasing the knowledge and confidence in the participants. It is acknowledged that the real success of the programme will be best evaluated by reviewing how the implementation of the new skills and of knowledge will be transferred to everyday practice. The TVN team are keen to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme by direct observation of clinical practice, comparison of clinical audit data and referral rates alongside monitoring compliance with clinical guidelines.

References
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