Keeping up the pressure on pressure ulcers

*Stevenage 27 January 2014 – Nurses celebrate success as latest figures show not a single patient at the Lister or QEII acquired a pressure ulcer in December*

Back in 2011, the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust (which runs the Lister and QEII hospitals) signed up to a national initiative to reduce the number of patients acquiring pressure ulcers in hospital. A small team of specialist nurses work with ward staff to identify the patients most at risk and take steps to prevent them developing pressure ulcers.

There are some wards that have gone for several years without a pressure ulcer, but this is the first time the whole Trust has been for a month without a single avoidable hospital-acquired pressure ulcer.

Dianne Brett, lead tissue viability nurse, said, ‘The whole team has worked together to virtually wipe out the pressure ulcers that can be avoided. This means that patients are getting better quicker and going home faster – which is better for them and means that we can, overall, see more patients. We’re tremendously proud of this achievement by our nurses, and all those who support them. It’s a real change in how we work and is making a fantastic difference to our patients.’

Nick Carver, chief executive said, ‘A generation ago, pressure ulcers – or bed sores as they were known then - were considered a fact of life when patients were unable to get out of bed for a long time. Pressure ulcers are painful, and can mean that a
patient needs to spend much longer in hospital. Thanks to new understanding and ways of working, this latest set of figures demonstrates once again how our nurses and the wider team are delivering ever-improving care.’

ENDS

Notes to editors

What is a pressure ulcer?

Also known as a bed sore, a pressure ulcer is caused when your skin is squashed between your bones and the bed or chair you are using. This means the blood can’t get through and - without blood - the tissue is damaged. When people are ill, this can happen quicker as they’re not up and moving around as normal. It’s a painful condition, and if it happens in hospital, a patient needs extra treatment and it can delay people going home.

Numbers of hospital-acquired, avoidable pressure ulcers have been falling dramatically at the Trust since the area took on greater focus in 2011. There have been no grade 4 (the most serious) hospital acquired, avoidable pressure ulcers on our wards since October 2011, in several wards it has been more than a year with no hospital-acquired, avoidable pressure ulcers and - for the first time ever - there were no hospital-acquired, avoidable pressure ulcers at the Lister, QEII or Mount Vernon Cancer Centre in December 2013.

Hospital-acquired, avoidable pressure ulcers – historical data

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<th>Month</th>
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<tbody>
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