

SEEING PRESSURE DAMAGE EARLIER

What people with dark skin tones told us about recognising early pressure injuries

“ We know our bodies best. Please listen to us. ”
– Participant



WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

People with dark skin tones are more likely to experience delayed recognition of pressure injuries because many healthcare professionals have been taught to look primarily for redness. This can lead to later diagnosis, more severe injuries and poorer outcomes.



SKIN DISCOLOURATION TOWARDS A DARKER HUE THAN THE SURROUNDING SKIN...



ITCHING



PAIN...



TEMPERATURE CHANGE...



SKIN LIGHTENING...



SWELLING...



SKIN COLOURS CHANGING TO BLACK, BLUE PURPLE OR RED...



SMOOTHER SKIN TEXTURE...



People told us to look beyond redness and consider a range of changes.



WHAT DID WE DO?



Interviewed 22 people with dark skin tones and family carers



Community-based participants receiving pressure area care or identified as being at high risk



Explored their experiences of recognising early skin changes

FOUR KEY MESSAGES FROM PARTICIPANTS

1

INDICATORS OF PRESSURE INJURY



Early changes are often subtle and look different across skin tones.

“It was darker, not red. That’s how I first noticed.”

– Participant

2

EXPERIENCED SYMPTOMS



People frequently noticed discomfort, itching or tenderness before visible skin breakdown.

“It was tender and itched before anything showed on the skin.”

– Participant

3

TRUST HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS



Participants valued clinicians who listened and took their concerns seriously.

“When they listened to me, we caught it early.”

– Participant

4

IMPROVE EDUCATION



Patients and carers want better training so staff recognise pressure injuries across all skin tones.

“More training will help others like me.”

– Participant

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?



Improve education on assessing diverse skin tones



Listen to patients and carers



Use touch as well as visual assessment



Recognise temperature and texture changes



Embed skin tone diversity within clinical guidelines and education

THE IMPACT

Improving equitable skin assessment can:



Reduce health inequalities



Support earlier identification



Improve patient safety



Prevent avoidable severe pressure injuries

PARTICIPANT VOICES

“You have to feel it, look at it and know the person.”

– Participant



“We are more than our skin tone. Treat us as individuals.”

– Participant



“Early action makes all the difference.”

– Participant



This study gives a voice to people with dark skin tones and their carers, helping us improve care and create a more equal healthcare system.



Full paper:

Oozageer Gunowa, N., Clemett, V., Hardy, J., et al. (2024) Early identification of pressure injuries in people with dark skin tones: Qualitative perspectives from community-based patients and their carers. *Journal of Community Nursing*, 38(1), 46–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.17362>

Read the full paper
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