



Qualitative perspectives on the early identification of pressure ulcers in people with dark skin tones



Dr Neesha Oozageer Gunowa, University of Surrey.

Public Summary:

As a discipline, nursing espouses values of inclusion, equity and diversity. However, there is only very limited research available surrounding the topic of pressure ulcers and skin tone diversity. People with dark skin tones are more likely to get more severe, higher stage pressure ulcers. Previous research suggests this is because pressure ulcer assessment largely focuses on people with light skin and visible skin changes such as redness. The present research project aimed to examine the personal experiences of people with dark skin tones, from the perspective of patients and/or their carers, and from the perspective of community nurses.

A two-phase study design was employed. The first phase involved conducting 22 interviews with people with dark skin tones and/or their family carers, who were known to and visited by community nurses for pressure area management or had a high pressure area risk assessment score.

In the second phase, three group interviews and six individual interviews were conducted with community nurses to explore how they assess early-stage pressure ulcers among people with dark skin tones. All interviews were carried out online, transcribed and analysed to help develop themes.

The findings from both phases of the study have provided valuable insights into how early-stage pressure damage is identified among people with dark skin tones. These insights have informed the development of patient-informed educational strategies for nurses and health workers, aimed at enabling the early identification of pressure ulcers in this population. By influencing and informing clinical policies and strategies, these findings have the potential to significantly reduce health inequities.



Public and Community Involvement:

A patient and public engagement group consisting of four individuals was established. This group, which met virtually on four occasions throughout the study, comprised individuals with dark skin tones or informal caregivers of individuals at high risk of pressure damage. These members were identified through previous work on pressure ulcers in individuals with dark skin tones, particularly in nurse education.

The group played a crucial role in reviewing information sheets for participants and ensuring the relevance and suitability of interview questions. Additionally, they have provided feedback on the illustrations developed from the study findings, aiding in the analysis and summarisation of the work.

Dissemination:

Dissemination efforts have been ongoing throughout the study, tailored to meet the needs of different audiences with appropriate language and information levels. Various methods have been employed, including written text with illustrations, graphs and figures in peer-reviewed journals, as well as posters and oral presentations at community meetings and international healthcare conferences. The study's insights have been integrated into teaching at the University of Surrey and broader institutions such as the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre.

[Project website](#)

Impact and Implementation:

The findings from both phases of the study have provided valuable insights into the identification of early-stage pressure damage among people with dark skin tones. These insights have led to the development of patient-informed educational strategies for nurses and health workers, enhancing their ability to identify pressure ulcers early. This can improve the quality and safety of local health and social care services by ensuring timely and accurate assessments, leading to better patient outcomes. Once completed the illustrations will be shared broadly to act as an aid memoir for 'How people with Dark Skin Tones see early signs of pressure ulcers on their skin' and 'How to enhance pressure ulcer care and awareness for patients with dark skin tones'.

Publications

[Journal publication: Early identification of pressure injuries in people with dark skin tones: Qualitative perspectives from community-based patients and their carers](#)

[Illustration: Enhancing pressure ulcer care and awareness for patients with dark skin tones](#)

[Illustration: How people with Dark Skin Tones see early signs of pressure](#)

What next?

Further funding is needed to delve deeper into the topic of health inequities and patient safety. Potential funders have been identified such as the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), an advanced fellowship.