

Patient Lifts and Transfer Equipment (Turning Devices) for Preventing Pressure Ulcers: A Review

Context

A pressure ulcer is an area of localized, persistent injury to the skin that may include blisters, open wounds, or even necrosis (tissue death), and is typically caused by sustained pressure on a particular body area. If the pressure is not relieved, the resulting oxygen deprivation reduces the ability of the wound to heal, and further tissue destruction can result. In Canada, it is estimated that the prevalence of pressure ulcers is as high as 25% in acute care settings and close to 30% in non-acute care settings. In addition to negatively impacting a patient's quality of life, pressure ulcers may prolong hospital stays and are associated with an increased financial burden. As a result, there is a lot of interest in preventing pressure ulcers, particularly in acute settings like intensive care units, as well as in long-term care settings.

Technology

Patient lifts and transfer equipment, sometimes referred to as turning devices, are designed to allow patients with decreased mobility to be repositioned regularly. These devices could potentially be used to help prevent pressure ulcers in these patients.

Issue

Any condition that prevents patients from being able to reposition themselves is a major risk factor for the development of pressure ulcers. Although various interventions have been suggested to prevent pressure ulcers, the most widely agreed-on intervention is to reposition patients on a regular basis. A review of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of patient lifts and transfer equipment for regular repositioning will help to inform

decisions about their use. A review of relevant evidence-based guidelines will further inform decisions about preventing pressure ulcers.

Methods

A limited literature search of key resources was conducted, and titles and abstracts of the retrieved publications were reviewed. Full-text publications were evaluated for final article selection according to predetermined selection criteria (population, intervention, comparator, outcomes, and study designs).

Key Messages

For the prevention of pressure ulcers in health care settings:

- There was no evidence found on the use of patient lifts and transfer equipment.
- Patient lifts and transfer equipment were not addressed in evidence-based guidelines.
- Information on interventions *other* than turning devices — such as turning regimens and multidisciplinary teams — was found and may be potentially useful.

Results

The literature search produced 180 citations of which 4 were deemed potentially relevant. No reports were identified from a search of the grey literature. Of the 4 potentially relevant reports, none met the criteria for inclusion in this review.

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