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Pain linked to double the risk of pressure ulcers

Patients experiencing pain at a skin site are more than twice as likely to develop a pressure ulcer as those without pain, according to a prospective study.

‘Patients with pressure ulcers have reported pain before and after ulceration. However, it has not previously been known whether pain can predict ulceration,’ explained lead researcher Michelle Briggs, from Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, UK. ‘We sought to examine the predictive ability of pain for predicting pressure ulceration.’

The group prospectively followed up 634 patients at high risk of developing pressure ulcers after screening 3286 patients from acute and community NHS centres. One in four (25%; 152/602) patients developed a new pressure ulcer during 30-day follow up. Results showed that 28% of people experiencing pain at a skin site developed a pressure ulcer (130/464), while only 15% of those with no pain at baseline went on to develop a pressure ulcer (22/138).

Univariate logistic regression identified three baseline factors that were statistically significantly associated with increased risk of developing a new pressure ulcer (category 2 or higher): pain, the presence of a category 1 pressure ulcer and alterations to intact skin.

Susan Mayor

More than one in four women have chronic pain after breast cancer surgery

More than one in four women have persistent pain after undergoing surgery for breast cancer, shows a study that reveals the ongoing pain is associated with increased anxiety and depression.

Long-term breast cancer patients were invited to take part in the questionnaire-based study that collected information on their treatment and pain after surgery. A total of 402 patients (mean age 63.5+10.72 years) completed the questionnaire. Just over one-quarter (28.6%, 115)

reported ongoing chronic pain. These patients then completed further questions about the nature of their pain.

Analysis of the results showed that patients with pain were significantly younger than those not reporting ongoing pain (64.58+10.49 *vs* 61.06+10.91 years, *P*=0.004). Their mean pain score on a visual analogue score was 3.4+2.44. More than one-third (35.7%) of women had pain with a visual analogue score > 4.37%. A similar proportion (37%) had Self-reported Leeds

Assessment of Neuropathic Symptoms and Signs > 12, suggesting neuropathic pain.

Women with persistent pain had significantly greater anxiety and depression scores than those without ongoing pain. Increased visual analogue score was associated with increased anxiety and total score on the Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale. Self-reported Leeds Assessment of Neuropathic Symptoms and Signs scores of 12 and higher were associated with lower chronic pain acceptance scores.

Susan Mayor

European survey reveals lack of pain education

More than two-thirds of undergraduate medical schools across Europe have no dedicated teaching on pain assessment and management, according to results from the first European-wide survey to review pain education.

An expert taskforce from the European Pain Federation carried out a cross-sectional survey on pain education using publicly available undergraduate medical curriculum for 242 of the 249 medical schools in 15 European countries. They also commissioned telephone interviews with staff from medical schools in 10 of these countries.

Dr Emma Briggs, Lecturer and King's Teaching Fellow, King's College London, London



‘We found that the provision of pain education is variable and inconsistent,’ reported Emma Briggs, lecturer and King's teaching fellow at King's College London, UK, chair of the British Pain Society Education Special Interest Group and a member of the project taskforce.

Results showed that 69% of undergraduate medical schools had no dedicated teaching on pain as part of the curriculum. An even higher proportion (82%) had no dedicated compulsory teaching on pain, and medical schools generally reported very low attendance at non-compulsory courses.

Even in medical schools providing dedicated, compulsory teaching on pain, medical students were receiving only 12 hours teaching on average, accounting for 0.2% of their total taught hours.

‘Given the burden of pain, with figures suggesting that one in five adults in Europe has chronic pain that is poorly managed, pain needs to be a higher priority and a core part in the undergraduate curriculum,’ suggested Dr Briggs.

The expert taskforce is recommending establishing a European framework for pain education to improve the consistency of pain teaching among medical schools.

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Susan Mayor