

A course in holistic approach to healing pressure ulcers in persons with SCI

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INTRODUCTION: Rehab Station Stockholm conducts medical rehabilitation for people with spinal cord injuries. Pressure ulcers are a common complication after a spinal cord injury (SCI). Paralyzed patients are having an increased risk of developing pressure ulcers due to muscle atrophy, decalcification of the skeletal system and sensory loss, as well as factors affected by the psychological state of the patient, e.g. nutrition, stress and depression.

Patients at Rehab Station Stockholm are educated in the importance of learning how to avoid and treat pressure ulcers (PU).

Many patients are admitted to Rehab Stations specific wound care programs where they are treated by the whole rehabilitation team. Problems can occur when patients are discharged to their homes too early before their wounds have completely closed. Many of our patients fail to close their wounds at home due to lack of correct pressure relief and knowledge about modern wound treatment.

Many district nurses do not have sufficient knowledge of SCI and work alone without cooperation with the whole rehabilitation team. This makes it difficult to get a holistic view of the situation. An admission and/or custom made review is necessary to get an overview and to plan treatment.

AIM: To heal and prevent pressure ulcers in order to improve quality of life and prevent unnecessary suffering.

METHODS: It's important to get the user; their relatives and helpers to understand the causes and effects of wound healing to achieve a positive and lasting result. That's why we have designed custom made courses in the user's home.

We check daily routines, lifestyle, wound care and educate the group. Advice and support is given continuously during the healing process by phone/email. Patients living in Stockholm are also followed up in the Rehab Station Spinalis outpatient clinic.

RESULTS: With this holistic method we see faster wound healing which can prevent years of suffering. This is also socioeconomically very positive. We see that the knowledge of pressure ulcers in both users, relatives and assistants are increasing, which means that they react and act faster when new pressure ulcers occurs.

CONCLUSIONS: Wound healing is normally rapid in our hospitalised patients as our holistic approach includes not only dressing changes but also pressure relief, suitable nutrition and correct tools to manage the situation.

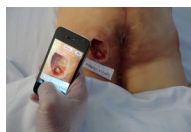
Our specialized experience and knowledge of pressure ulcers, rehabilitation of SCI and technical aids makes it possible to assist even at home. The review and education in cooperation with the user, family and staff is a successful combination for wound healing.

A custom-made course at home.

Practical assessment of pressure ulcers and environmental factors.



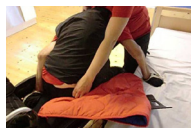
Review of dressing material and change frequency.



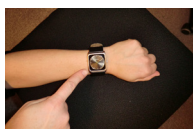
Wound documentation, measurement and photograph.



Review of devices such as mattress, cushions in both the wheelchair and toilet/showerchair, relief for heels, sliding materials.



Review of transfer, contracture prophylaxis and the technique to get dressed.



Seating restrictions/Off-load in 30 degrees side-lying position in bed.



Incontinence aids and bladder/bowel routines.



Nutrition, Protein supplements are needed for heavily exuding wounds.

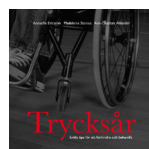


Seating position, individually adapted wheelchair. Reviewing lifestyle.

Lecture for the user, family members, helpers, district nurse and occupational therapist.

- What is a pressure ulcer?
How does it arise?
Which routines affect the healing?
- Prevention of pressure ulcers
- We show pictures and measurement of the users wound size and depth and describe the wound bed.
- Review today's routines and technical aids
- Recommendation for wound care. Dressing material adapted for the wound bed and what knowledge the person that is doing the dressing changes has.
- Recommendations for new routines and aids.

Two books with useful tips written by M. Stenius are included in the course. One is about pressure ulcer and the other about bowel and bladder disorders.



Trycksår - Enkla tips för att förhindra och behandla (Pressure ulcer - Simple tips to prevent and treat)

SHIT HAPPENS - Bowel and bladder disorders

Also in Swedish SKITENKELT - Om tarm- och blåsrukning



After the custom-made course:

- We send a written summary with photos of the holistic wound care and our proposed actions.
- Advice and support is given continuously during healing process by phone / email
- Follow-up by telephone call after 1 month

The outcome after a custom-made course:

A tetraplegic man with pressure ulcers (PU) in category 4 on both seat bones (tuber ischii). Despite offload in bed and help from health care professionals his two pressure ulcers did not heal after 2 years of treatment.

He contacted us for help when he heard of our specialized experience and knowledge of pressure ulcers and persons with SCI from a tetraplegic friend.

In the check-up we discovered three more pressure ulcers in category 1, on both hips, and on his right knee. All were caused by incorrect offload in bed.

We changed;

1. Dressing material and frequency
2. Shower chair and cushion (to a tilt chair and pressure relief cushion)
3. Recommended new bowel routines in order to decrease time on the toilet.
4. Started contracture prophylaxis in order to prevent stiffness and pulmonary complications.
5. Showed offload 30 degrees in side-lying position in bed.

Results after 14 days;

One PU category 4 was healed and the other was decreased to half it's size. All the three categories 1 PU were healed.

The user and his relatives and carers now have more knowledge so they can react and act faster in order to prevent new pressure ulcers.



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