

First competency framework launched for field of tissue viability

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Tissue viability is an important, multi-faceted branch of healthcare that includes the treatment of wounds and ulcers. Now, a University of Huddersfield expert has played a key role in drawing up a new framework designed to raise standards and ensure consistency throughout the UK.

Dr Karen Ousey is the University's Reader in Advancing Clinical Practice and is the facilitator of a project – supported by Urgo Medical – that has led to the publication of a draft Competency Framework for the field of tissue viability. It has now been launched at the 2015 Wounds UK Annual Conference. After 12 months' evaluation, the framework will be revised if needed and a final version issued towards the close of 2016 – The document can be obtained by visiting www.qurgo.co.uk/376-tvlc.

It opens with a summary of the role of the Tissue Viability Practitioner, describing it as:

...complex, encompassing a range of healthcare specialities, which include paediatrics, adults, older people, mental health, and learning disabilities. Practitioners are expected to possess specialist knowledge and skills to expertly manage a range of skin integrity issues, and to identify, appraise, analyse and implement up-to-date, evidence-based findings into clinical practice.

The increasing and ageing population of Britain will make the discipline

more important than ever, state Dr Ousey and her colleagues, but "to date within tissue viability, there are very few tools with which to measure and benchmark expertise".

Competencies to address shortfall

The framework addresses this shortfall by providing a sequence of ten "competencies". They include pressure ulcer prevention and management, [wound care](#), lower limb ulceration, dermatology and pharmacotherapy, plus leadership, management and teamwork.

The requirements of all the competencies are listed, alongside spaces for assessment and evidence of practitioner's level of skill and their goals for development.

To carry out the research and develop the Framework, Dr Ousey was joined by Jeanette Milne, who is Tissue Viability Nurse Specialist at South Tyneside NHS Trust; Val Henderson, Clinical Lead Tissue Viability Nurse for the Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust; Leanne Atkin, Vascular Nurse Specialist at the Mid-Yorkshire NHS Trust; and Becki Carter, regional sales manager for Urgo Medical.

Research included an online questionnaire that received 200 responses from practitioners, plus a sequence of in-depth interviews with specialists in tissue viability.

A range of issues emerged during the project, said Dr Ousey, including the fact that job descriptions and job titles in the field varied widely throughout Britain. Also, many patients were unaware of the phrase "tissue viability" or did not know what it encompassed. "Wound care" was a more generally understood term.

"But I think we need to use '[tissue viability](#)', because it is about more

than just wound care. It also covers subjects such as the holistic assessment of the patient, business planning – in order to recruit more staff – plus leadership skills. It is a massive field," said Dr Ousey, whose roles at the University of Huddersfield include the direction of its Institute of Skin Integrity and Infection Prevention.

Provided by University of Huddersfield

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