New treatment can reduce facial pressure injuries from PPE in frontline healthcare workers

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Pictured is Natalie McEvoy, Clinical Research Nurse in Anaesthesia and Critical Care at RCSI, wearing her personal protective equipment. A study from RCSI has found that a new 'care bundle' can reduce the incidence of facial pressure injuries in frontline COVID-19 healthcare workers caused by the prolonged wearing of Personal Protective Equipment. Credit: RCSI

A study has found that a new 'care bundle' can reduce the incidence of facial pressure injuries in frontline COVID-19 healthcare workers caused by the prolonged wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The study, led by researchers from RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences Skin Wounds and Trauma (SWaT) Research Centre, is published in the current edition of the Journal of Wound Care.

The research took place over a two-month period amongst healthcare workers in a large acute hospital in Ireland. In the study, approximately 300 frontline staff were provided with a care bundle, which was designed in line with international best practice and consisted of face cleansing material (WaterWipes baby wipes), moisturizing balm (Eucerin Aquaphor Soothing Skin BalmTM), and protective tape (Mepitac TapeTM).

Results showed that prior to using the care bundle 29% of respondents developed a facial pressure injury, whereas after using the care bundle only 8% of respondents developed such an injury. The analysis revealed that when using the care bundle, staff were almost five times less likely to develop a facial pressure injury. In a secondary finding, respondents reported the bundle as easy to use, safe and effective.

Professor Zena Moore, Director of the SWaT Research Centre and Head of the RCSI School of Nursing and Midwifery, was lead researcher on the study. Prof Moore said, "We are acutely aware of the facial injuries, such as pressure ulcers, bruises and skin tears that healthcare workers are experiencing due to the prolonged wearing of protective equipment during the pandemic and especially the wearing of medical face masks. These injuries can be painful for staff and injuries in some cases can put them at increased risk of infection. This study is the first of its kind carried out at the height of the pandemic in an effort to help mitigate the occurrence of Facial Pressure Injuries. The results tell us that when skincare is prioritized, and a systematic preventative care bundle approach is adopted, there are clear benefits for the frontline workers and the workplaces involved."

Provided by RCSI

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