

2

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES' KNOWLEDGE AND MANGEMNT PRACTICES OF PEOPLE WITH VENOUS LEG ULCERATION IN THE COMMUNITY SETTING IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Sandra Barrett

University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

Aim: The aim of this study is to describe public health nurses' (PHNs) knowledge and management practices of people with venous leg ulceration in the Republic of Ireland.

Method: A cross-sectional survey method was used to gather data from a random sample of (N=500) registered PHNs administered by An Bord Altranais. The data collection instrument was a self completion postal questionnaire, which generated both quantitative and qualitative data.

Results: 132 PHNs (n=132) took part in the survey yielding a response rate of 32.5%. The sample was randomised and geographically spread indicating that the findings may be generalised to the wider population of PHNs within the Republic of Ireland. Themes explored during the survey included factors that influenced clinical decision-making, knowledge and management practices, constraints to providing best practice and education and training.

Discussion: The profile of the group studied suggests they are highly experienced and a valuable resource in managing people with venous leg ulcers in the community. The findings suggest that managing leg ulcers is an integral component of the role of public health nurses in Ireland.

The findings indicate that the majority of PHNs regard other nursing colleagues as the experts in leg ulcer management to inform their clinical decision making, especially Clinical Nurse Specialists and nurses working in a leg ulcer clinic.

The findings suggest that the majority >90% of PHNs surveyed described knowledge and management practices that are consistent with good practice and in line with current leg ulcer guidelines.

The findings highlight the importance of assessing and maintaining quality of life in people with leg ulceration. The findings suggest that client concordance is the most frequently reported barrier to providing best practice in leg ulcer management. The vast majority of PHNs (79%) sought further education and training related to leg ulcer management practices. This survey has generated valuable data to inform the debate on the challenges public health nurses experience in managing people with leg ulceration in the community.