

PRESSURE ULCERS – EPIDEMIOLOGY AND IMPACT**Zena Moore¹**¹*Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, RCSI (Dublin, Ireland)*

Pressure ulcers are not a modern phenomenon; they have been known to exist since ancient Egyptian times and probably since man has been on earth. It is interesting that despite widespread education and training in this area, and the huge investment in both human and financial resources, pressure ulcers remain a significant health problem today. Changing demographics and the predicted rise in the number of older persons, suggests that the number of pressure ulcers is set to rise correspondingly, unless effective pressure ulcer prevention measures are put into place. Having an understanding of the epidemiology and impact of pressure ulcers can contribute to

the development of targeted prevention strategies for the following reasons:

- Knowing that pressure ulcers are a problem may raise the awareness of their significance
- Understanding the impact that pressure ulcers have on the individual may foster a change in attitudes and subsequent behaviours in pressure ulcer prevention
- Appreciating the financial impact of pressure ulcers may facilitate a more critical questioning of the measures used for both prevention and management
- Appreciating pressure ulcer prevalence and incidence figures identifies areas with greater or lesser problems, thereby facilitating the targeting of resources appropriately

This paper will provide an overview of the epidemiology and impact of pressure ulcers on health and social gain. It is hoped that understanding these aspects of pressure ulcers will place into context the importance of this health care problem. Further, the paper will raise the awareness of the need to invest in implementation and evaluation of existing guidelines.