

GRUPO ASSOCIATIVO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO EM FERIDAS



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Grupo Associativo de Investigação em Feridas

In Portugal, the lack of a holistic approach to wound care can be considered a significant problem with implications in the cost and quality of the care. Based on the principle that to implement a concerted action plan it is essential to develop skills in this area, a group of health professionals with different backgrounds (doctors, nurses, pharmacists) created the Wound Care Research Group G@IF – Grupo Associativo de Investigação em Feridas, in March 2002. At present we have 500 individual paying members and 12 corporate members.

G@IF is one of the two wound care societies existing in Portugal. We established as our main objectives:

– to undertake research and disseminate knowledge concerning the management and prevention of wounds in order to promote quality in the delivery of care to individuals and their family as well as to increase the satisfaction of wound care professionals

We started by identifying the main aspects that need to be addressed if any progress is to be made in this field. Firstly, there is a need to develop a culture of evaluating recent scientific knowledge and to promote evidence based practice. Secondly, a system needs to be developed to deliver appropriate resources with training in their appropriate use. Finally, a system of documentation needs to be developed to allow for objective evaluation of the results. We believe that this may only be achieved by concerted action involving both hospitals and community health centres.

One of the main problems identified is that practitioners continue to have difficulty in compiling empirical and contextual evidence and integrating evidence-based changes into practice. To help define specific problems, potential interventions and desired outcomes, G@IF has developed several activities in different intervention areas.

G@IF has created an Internet site – www.gaif.net – where we publish the results of our research projects; articles; discussion sessions; links to other wound care societies and national and international news, among other topics. With this we hope to help practitioners in establishing a system of reference for their practices.

Since major barriers for further education are lack of time, economic resources, staff shortages which do not allow for being away from work and lack of training courses, G@IF has been trying to develop some activities to face this situation. Until now the main educational events have been:

- an annual Wound Care Summer School held every September in which 30 participants selected from different work environments get together during three and a half days to receive training from national and international experts;
- an annual two day conference usually taking place in May. At the last event which took place in 2007 we had 1180 participants including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, podologists, etc.
- one day events on specific topics: e.g. wound infection; pressure ulcers etc.

We believe that this kind of activities promote an easy and accessible way of obtaining up-to-date information. Most speakers are Portuguese, which is a way of recognising and motivating national practitioners. In the coffee area, delegates have the opportunity to peruse products and talk to company representatives. G@IF considers companies involved in tissue viability as part of the multi-professional team, albeit slightly peripheral. Our corporate members have contributed to raise our level of knowledge through their expertise and support.

G@if is also promoting some activities in the research field:

- Validation of Push tool, Bates scale, Baby Braden scale and Cardiff scale.
- project of implementation of Braden Scale in ten hospitals from across of Portugal (with European funding).

Pressure ulcers are a common problem in Hospitals, and this study, with a duration of three years, aims to examine the problem in more depth and try to give quality care in resource limited environments, through implementation of Braden scale (validated in Portugal), development and implementation of guidelines and education. Every three months an audit takes place covering clinical practice, such as documentation of prevalence data, risk assessment and provision of specialist equipment. This aims to find out if the implementation and dissemination strategy for the guidelines has led to better care.

All these studies have taken place in collaboration with the Center of Studies and Research in Health (CEIS) and the Institute of Quality in Health (IQS).

Furthermore, G@if has starting publishing short documents about different aspects of wound care management, as Portugal is lacking in national publications on wound management.

The first document was published in May 2007 and is about prevention and treatment of leg ulcers in ambulatory care.

At a European level G@IF has attended several European activities such as those promoted by EPUAP and EWMA. We appreciate EWMA support and look forward to developing projects together in order to help raising the profile of acute and chronic wounds.

We are aware that changing professional behaviour is not easy, as the individual person's professional practice is influenced by numerous factors. Success needs time, but with the help of all we will spend the necessary time in the development and implementation of strategies to understand the complex multi-factorial issues that may impact on the care and progress of patients and develop day-to-day practice.

Future projects: In 2007 we have been asked to organise a multidisciplinary group to work on the development of national guidelines for prevention and treatment of specific chronic wounds: pressure ulcers, leg ulcers, etc. We are also hoping to undertake a study on the issue of reimbursement for wound care products.

We look forward to see you in Lisbon!

Katia Furtado, Elaine Pina, João Gouveia
Portuguese Wound Care Research Group

