Title: *Lower Body Skin Inspection to Determine the Incidence of Pressure Ulcers in Individuals with Spina Bifida*

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Background: Individuals with spina bifida experience a mix of bony deformity, sensory loss and cognitive processing challenges that put them at significant risk for pressure ulcers on their lower bodies. The goals of the study are to describe the problem of pressure ulcers in individuals with spina bifida and to recommend frequency of skin inspection in order to eliminate or minimize the prevalence of pressure ulcers across the lifespan.

Methods: The research design is quantitative. The sample consisted of patients older than 2 years old with myelomeningocele who presented for any clinic services during the time frame of June 1, 2010-September 30, 2010. Data was collected through visual inspection of the feet and lower body of these individuals. Data points included age, gender, level of myelomeningocele, presence and location of wounds and pressure ulcer staging using NPUAP guidelines.

Results: 17 wounds were found among 21 females and 29 wounds in 23 male patients. Location of wounds varied but was increased in areas of left ischial tuberosity and top of feet. 50% of the time patient indicated that they had no wound but there were wounds present on visual inspection. The living situation in relationship to the presence of wounds was analyzed. Patients were 5x more likely to have a wound if they lived independently vs with their family and 10x more likely to have a wound if they lived in a group home vs with their family.

Conclusion: The data is still in its preliminary form but it reveals a strong need to make sure that visual inspection of the skin is completed at all clinic visits due to the fact that half the patients were unaware of their current wounds. These wounds were not insignificant ranging from stage I to stage IV pressure ulcers.