An audit of nurse’s use of compression hosiery within two NHS Trusts

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Introduction
Compression therapy is considered as one of the most significant advancements in relation to wound care in the last 50 years (Hampton 2002) and now plays an important role in the treatment and prevention of venous and lympho-venous disorders. (Lymphoedema Framework 2006, World Union of Wound Healing Societies 2008, Wounds U.K. 2007).

Use of compression hosiery is common practice for many healthcare professionals, particularly nurses. Whilst manufacturers offer guidance for appropriate selection, there is limited research on the decision-making by nurses when selecting hosiery. An audit of 40 nurses from Worcestershire Primary Care Trust and Worcestershire Acute Trust has been undertaken to identify the factors influencing decision making when selecting hosiery for patients.

Method
Audit forms were distributed in 2010 amongst community and hospital nurses who attended 2 annual Trust-led study sessions. 100 audit forms were distributed, yielding a valid 42% return rate.

Results
The findings from the audit are multi-faceted and give valuable insight into the uses of compression therapy, the compression therapy selected and the decision making that underpins choice. This has implications for the trusts, in terms of formulary, education and clinical effectiveness.

Reasons for hosiery use were identified as follows:

- 97% use British Standard off-the-shelf hosiery
- 39% use custom made British Standard hosiery
- 28% use European Union Standard off-the-shelf compression hosiery
- 8% use hosiery treatment kits

The respondents followed the hosiery:

- 92% concordance
- 86% level of compression
- 83% sizing/fit
- 64% formulary listing

Factors that influence practitioners' choice of hosiery:

- 97% use British Standard off-the-shelf hosiery
- 39% use custom made British Standard hosiery
- 28% use European Union Standard off-the-shelf compression hosiery
- 8% use hosiery treatment kits

Discussion
Prevention of ulcer recurrence is the most common use for compression hosiery within the Trust. Consensus indicates that not wearing hosiery was strongly associated with ulcer recurrence (Nelson, Bell-Syer, Cullum and Webster 2010). Importantly, management of venous leg ulceration was cited as costing the National Health Service £230-400 million in 1991 (Bentley 2001). Appropriate selection of hosiery would therefore present considerable cost minimisation and, more importantly, improved quality of life for individuals.

References