



Federaal Kenniscentrum voor de Gezondheidszorg  
Centre Fédéral d'Expertise des Soins de Santé  
Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre

# A national guideline for the prevention of pressure ulcers

Request from the SPF Santé Publique – FOD  
Volksgezondheid



In collaboration with

- Academic teams UGent/KULeuven
- National Clinical Guideline Centre (NCGC) who produces a guideline on behalf of NICE
- Wound care organisations (CNC vzw, WCS, AFISCeP.be)



NCGC



# Rationale

Resulting from an external mechanical load (pressure and/or shear)

High prevalence: 12% in Belgian hospitals (Category I-IV)

Pressure ulcer prevention: very frequent nursing intervention

Various settings: hospitals, nursing homes, homecare

# Topics: clinical effectiveness

1.

•Risk assessment: + predictive value

2.

•Skin assessment: + predictive value

3.

•Skin massage

4.

•Repositioning

5.

•Re-distributing devices

6.

•Re-distributing devices heels

7.

•Nutrition or hydration

# Methods

Clinical effectiveness : (Systematic review of) RCTs

Prognostic questions: (Systematic review of) Prospective cohort studies

GRADE: level of evidence and strength of recommendations

Best practices: high-quality guidelines + experts and stakeholders

# Results in general

## Body of evidence

- Low to very low quality

## Frequent problems

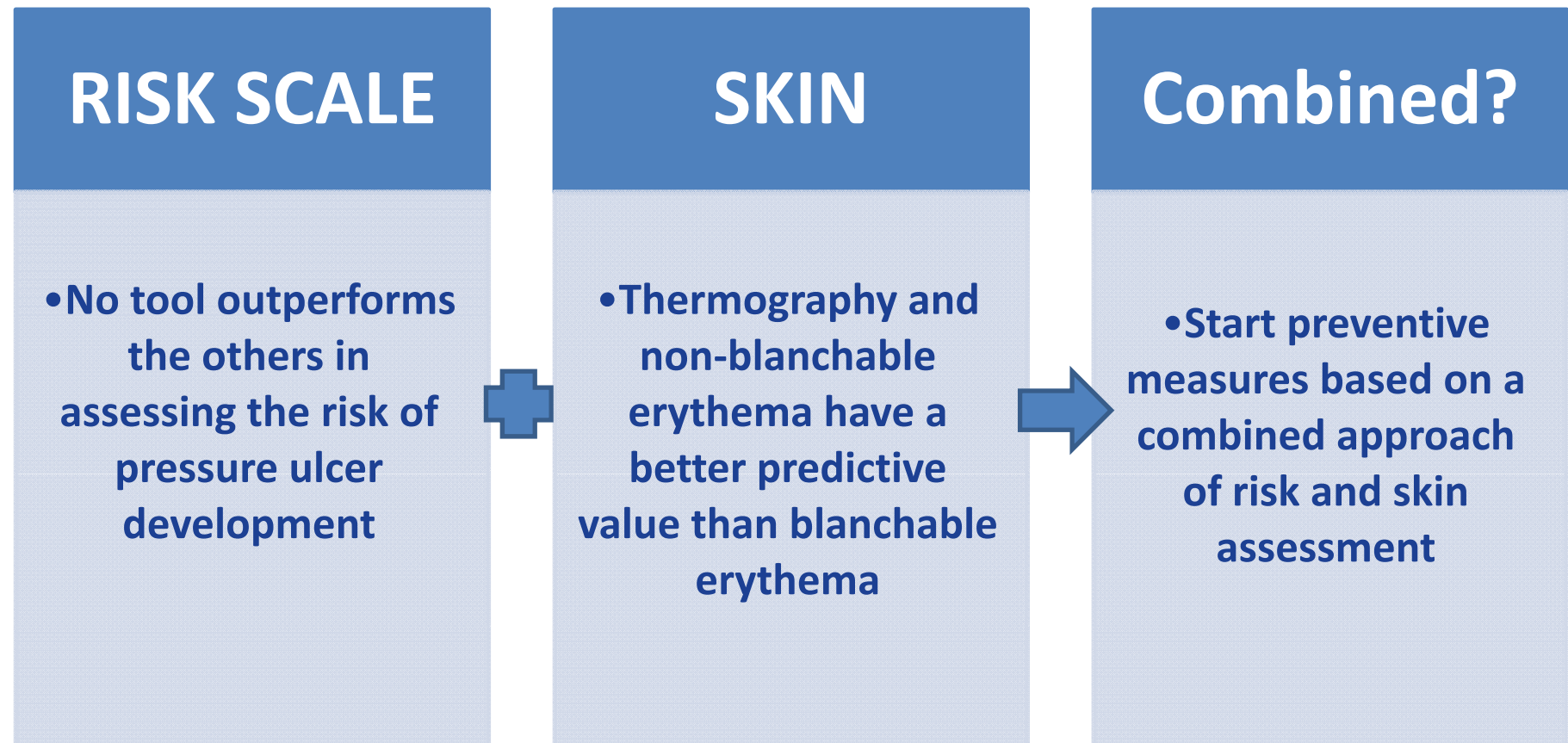
- Heterogeneity
- Under-powered studies
- Lack of blind – or independently verified outcome assessment
- Patients free from pressure ulcers at baseline: not reported
- Poor description of standard care and co-interventions

# Topics: clinical effectiveness

1. •Risk assessment: + predictive value
2. •Skin assessment: + predictive value
3. •Skin massage
4. •Repositioning
5. •Re-distributing devices
6. •Re-distributing devices heels
7. •Nutrition or hydration



# Results: risk & skin assessment





# Topics: clinical effectiveness

3.

- Skin massage: beneficial or harmful? no evidence

4.

- Repositioning: effective, no clear differences between schemes

5.

- Re-distributing devices:
  - 1. Constant low pressure and alternating devices
  - 2. Operation overlay system

6.

- Re-distributing devices heels: Devices that ensures heels are free of the surface of the bed + redistributing mattress

7.

- Nutrition or hydration: no clinically important effect of nutritional supplements

# Discussion

An important health problem BUT lack of high-quality research on how to prevent them

Absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence

Variability between organisations

Indications that comprehensive programs are successful



# Clinical recommendations

Structured, combined approach for risk & skin assessment

Repositioning protocol

Pressure redistributing mattresses

Use devices that ensure heels are free of the surface of the bed

Pressure redistributing overlays on the operating table

Tailored interventions: level of risk, skin status, general health status, comfort, overall plan of care

# Policy recommendations

## Health Research System

- Assessment for need of update

## Federal Council on the quality of the Nursing activities

- Process and outcome indicators based on the content of this guideline and aligned with existing initiatives

## FOD / SPF

- To transform and disseminate in a user-friendly format for daily use. This should be done in close collaboration with *professional organisations*.

## Providers & institutions

- To integrate comprehensive programs for preventing pressure ulcers (e.g. bundles of best-practices, staff education, awareness campaigns, skin care resource nurses, multidisciplinary pressure ulcer prevention committees) in the global quality improvement policy

# Colophon

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