Problem:
Pressure ulcers remain an issue for healthcare organization. Despite preventive efforts, hospital acquired pressure ulcers are a major problem for patients, especially those in intensive care settings where incidence rates range from 7%-38%. Current practice standards of repositioning patients may do more harm than good, however; changing these standards can be challenging.

Evidence:
Pressure ulcers develop due to etiological factors including pressure, friction, and shearing, combined with other risk factors lead to tissue breakdown. Improper lateral rotation of a patient could fail to provide pressure relief, or could lead to excessive pressure. In the Surgical Trauma ICU patients were turned using rolled up blankets. The use of an inclinometer demonstrated patients were not turned far enough. Pressure mapping revealed that rolled up blankets used for repositioning exerted pressure in excess of 40-100mmHg.

Strategy:
To improve practice, several actions were taken. First, the concept of standardizing positioning devices were introduced to the unit practice council and skin team. Second, staff were encouraged try custom and commercially available foam wedge products to experience the “patient’s perspective”. Staff had input into modifications such as length and upholstery material. Finally, nurses visualized pressure differences between devices using a FSA pressure mapping system.

Practice Change:
Adoption of a standardized foam wedge was achieved through staff involvement in the decision making process and modifications of the device. The first hand experience of testing the devices coupled with the visual graphic display by the pressure map made the choice clear.

Evaluation and Results:
The foam wedge was the most effective for turning patients 30 degrees and was the most comfortable. It exerted 20mmHg compared to 40-100mmHg by the blanket roll.

Recommendations:
Utilization of a pressure map provides a means for quantifying support surface performance that can further be used for staff education. Standardizing patient positioning devices to foam wedges provides lower interface pressure that could possibly reduce the incidence of pressure ulcers caused by other devices.
Bibliography:


Reddy m, Gill S, & Rochon P. Preventing Pressure Ulcers: A Systematic Review. JAMA. 2006; 296(8):974-984