

## **WHAT A RELIEF! AN EXPLORATION OF CURRENT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE IN PRESSURE CARE**

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**Introduction:** Pressure ulcers are a severe and costly yet predominantly preventable burden on health care systems worldwide. Occupational therapists are recognised members of the multidisciplinary team involved in the provision of pressure care, however, published evidence supporting their role is limited.

**Objectives:**

\*To more clearly define the role of occupational therapy in pressure care.

\*To investigate occupational therapist's clinical decision making, including their use of risk assessment scales in current practice.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional self-administered online survey was developed and distributed through OT Australia to collect responses from practicing occupational therapists Australia-wide. Data was analysed using statistical tests and content analysis.

**Results:** A total of 277 completed surveys were returned. Aged care formed the largest practice area group with 38% of the sample. The majority of participants worked in community settings (53%) and were involved in pressure care on a regular basis. Risk assessment scales were used by 84% of participants with the Waterlow being the most frequently administered scale (61%). The most frequently used interventions were the prescription of seating surfaces and pressure relief mattresses, education of the client (weight shifting and skin care), transfer training and increasing physical activity to relieve pressure, all identified by over 80% of the sample.

**Conclusions:** Occupational therapists play a critical role in the prevention and treatment of pressure ulcers and are expected to make best-practice, cost-effective decisions with a limited evidence base to support them. Results of this study highlight the need for pressure care practice to be explored further, particularly in community aged care settings.