

From Policy to Practice: Improving Nurses' Preparedness in Managing Superficial Skin Breakdown

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Background

Superficial skin breakdown is **common** among hospitalized patients, despite being preventable. Early identification and management prevent progression to more complex wounds.

At UHN, the *Superficial Skin Breakdown* medical directive supports timely, nurse-led wound care at bedside; however, variations in awareness, confidence, and application can impact consistency in practice.

! Importance

Delays in wound management can lead to:

- Wound progression
- Increased pain and discomfort
- Longer hospital stays

On the **neurovascular unit (NVU)**, these risks are amplified due to *immobility, impaired sensation, and challenges in communicating discomfort*, making timely intervention critical to preventing avoidable complications.

🎯 Aim

Increase appropriate nurse-initiated use of the *Superficial Skin Breakdown* medical directive by **10%** by March 2026.

🔗 Methods

Interventions (PDSA-informed)

- **Education:** In-services and 1:1 EPIC teaching
- **Decision Support:** Badge cards, posters, quick-reference tools, unit wound care binder
- **Workflow Changes:** Organized wound care baskets and improved supply access

📏 Measures

Outcome

- % of appropriate initiated directives

Process

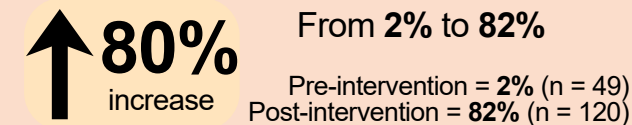
- Nursing confidence

Balancing

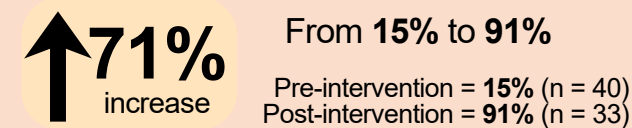
- Impact on workflow and perceived workload

📊 Results

Superficial Skin Breakdown Medical Directive Utilization by RNs and RPNs



Nursing Confidence in Initiating the Directive



Workflow Impact

76% of nurses report that applying the directive does **NOT** add significant burden to their workload

88% of nurses report wound care on NVU feels more *standardized*

📌 Conclusion

Key Takeaways

- Bridging the gap between policy and practice improves patient care
- Nurses can confidently initiate early interventions with the right support

Next Steps

- Sustain and integrate education into unit and corporate orientation
- Expand across additional UHN units
- Continue monitoring and refining practice

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