

# The unknowns in tissue viability

**Jeanette Milne**, Clinical Lead, Tissue Viability, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and Treasurer, Wound Care Alliance

I can't think of a better field of nursing to work in than tissue viability. After 29 years as a nurse and 19 in the field of tissue viability I never tire of the adrenaline rush of healing a challenging wound. Despite the ageing population and austerity, nurses continue to rise to the challenge and are working harder than ever to meet the patient safety agenda. Tissue viability has played a central role in reducing the number of hospital-acquired pressure ulcers and raising public awareness, as a result of the NHS Midlands & East 'Stop the Pressure Campaign' that was adopted by NHS Improvement. We have also seen inspirational campaigns that have put the fun back into learning, such as 'Heel Hero', a caped character in foot form appearing on educational and awareness materials from Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust (reminding us to 'deal with the heel'), and 'Sally Sore', the teaching-aid-come-mascot for pressure ulcer prevention at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust. There are Twitter challenges such as Pressure Area Challenge — (can you list all the pressure areas in 2 minutes)— initiated by University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which will be announcing the winning Trust out of all those who have signed up for the challenge on 3 July 2017.

Alongside pressure ulcer targets, this year sees the introduction of the community Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) target (NHS, 2017) for wound assessment, which seeks to improve wound diagnosis; the cornerstone of successful wound management. Also, launched under the NHS Right Care agenda (2017) is 'Betty's Case', an example of an unwarranted variation in leg ulcer care that outlines the costs associated with inappropriate leg ulcer care to both the health economy and patient, and outlines the benefits of standardising care.

I am excited by both challenges but a little anxious in relation to how I inspire colleagues against the backdrop of staff shortages and other competing health campaigns. The King's Fund's *Making Integrated Care Happen* (2013) discusses the challenges of change at scale and pace. NHS England (2015) has introduced the Sustainability Transformation plans and Accountable Care Organisations, which aim to reduce the barriers between organisation and encourage joint working to meet the health and social needs of local populations. All initiatives mentioned encourage clinicians to embrace quality improvement methodology. If you are a novice at quality improvement, a good resource is the NHS Scotland Quality Improvement Hub and specifically its publication on the spread and sustainability of quality improvement in health care (2014). It discusses the importance of leadership and engagement at all levels, measurement, the importance of and how to present data, building capacity, and testing small

changes prior to implementation at scale, as well as organisational culture and understanding human factors.

Ironically, I am writing this editorial on the eve of the UK general election, which adds a degree of uncertainty. It brings to mind the infamous Donald Rumsfeld quote:

*'There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. There are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know.'*

Those working in the field of tissue viability must embrace its knowns, overcome the challenge of the unknowns and view the current focus from NHS Improvement as an opportunity to engage organisations and improve the care of patients with chronic wounds.

The King's Fund (2013) *Making Integrated Care Happen at Scale and Pace*. <http://tinyurl.com/ybeuzxk2> (accessed 8 June 2017)

NHS England (2015) *Delivering the Forward View: NHS planning guidance 2016/17 – 2020/21*. <http://tinyurl.com/opedro6> (accessed 8 June 2017)

NHS Right Care (2017) *NHS RightCare scenario: The variation between standard and optimal pathways*. <http://tinyurl.com/yb8tr7dx> (accessed 8 June 2017)

NHS (2017) *Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN)* <http://tinyurl.com/ybx7q2qn> (accessed 8 June 2017)

NHS Scotland Quality Improvement Hub (2014) *The spread and sustainability of quality improvement in healthcare*. <http://tinyurl.com/o6fum9g> (accessed 8 June 2017)

**Article published in British Journal of Nursing 2017, Vol 26 No 12, Tissue Viability Supplement**