

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO OCCIPITAL PRESSURE ULCERS RELATED TO CERVICAL COLLARS.

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Pressure ulcers related to cervical collars are a common difficult-to-manage complication of cervical immobilization in the trauma patient. After many cases of occipital pressure ulcers occurred at our institution a multidisciplinary task force was formed to look at this issue. The group was to identify causes for this problem and develop a plan to decrease the occurrence of pressure ulcers related to cervical immobilization. The problem involved three areas that needed improvement. These were: nursing care, the type of collar used, and the lengthy process of clearing C-spines. The group developed objectives, goals, and interventions to resolve these concerns. The task force developed a protocol for nursing care, changed to a different type of cervical collar, and developed a protocol for clearing cervical spine films. Through the use of a multidisciplinary approach, the development of protocols and a new product, pressure ulcers related to cervical collars have been eliminated in our institution. In addition, patients are staying in cervical collars half the time as before the protocol was implemented.

SELECTED QUOTATIONS

Introduction

“Occipital pressure ulcers are largely preventable and in the early stages are readily responsive to the appropriate therapies.” (Pg. 47)

“At our institution we noticed an increase in occipital breakdown related to the presence of cervical collars. We observed 19 documented cases of skin breakdown in a one-year period.” (Pg. 47)

“We began official implementation of the collars [sic. Aspen], in January of 1996. After one year and 76 patients in collars we had only one case of skin breakdown and this was attributed to the patient not being placed in the appropriate sized collar.” (Pg. 50)

“The cost of treating just one occipital breakdown was calculated to be \$4,323.00.” (Pg. 50)

“The collars that were chosen were twice as expensive as the ones currently used. However when this is compared with the cost of treating these ulcers, it is a justifiable cost.” (Pgs. 50-52)