

Did you know? Maternity pressure ulcers



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From 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2018 NHS Resolution received 96 claims relating to pressure ulcers suffered by women in maternity units.

Of these, 87 claims were awarded compensation, the cost to the NHS was £2,473,244.

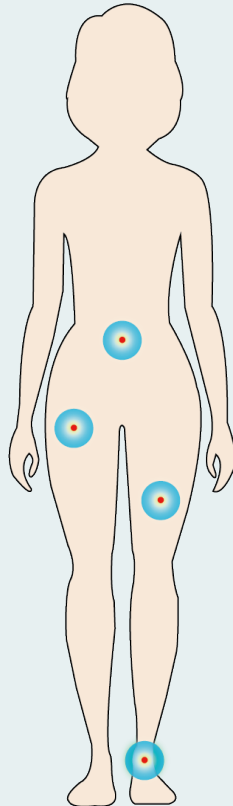
Damages: £1,081,585

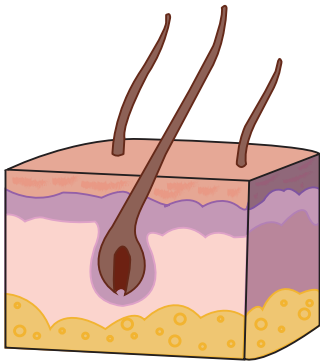
Defence costs: £174,145

Claimant costs: £1,217,514

Frequency of sores type

- 84 buttocks
- 8 sacral area
- 9 heels
- 2 thigh
- 18 no site identified





Grade of sores

- 6 Grade 1
- 39 Grade 2
- 16 Grade 3
- 45 grade not specified

Some women had more than one pressure sore

Common themes

- all women had received an epidural
- prolonged labour
- lack of risk assessment and planning
- lack of bariatric and pressure relieving equipment

The impact of pressure damage on women

- claimant uses a cushion to help with her pain and her maximum sitting time is 20 minutes
- the expert comments that the woman had a very active lifestyle before baby was born but now walking long distances is difficult and she can no longer ride a horse or cycle
- the expert believes that many of her present symptoms are likely to be long term. The expert comments that as she is unable to sit for long periods of time, this could affect her employability
- sitting to breastfeed her baby was very painful

What could you do?

- Do you have a local policy for risk assessing skin integrity? Do you know how to use it?
- Encourage women with an epidural to mobilise if it is safe for them to do so
- Regularly change the position of women in labour
- Do you discuss the possible risk of pressure damage when consent for epidural is sought?

Resources

Pressure ulcers i-learn module. This can be accessed by all RCM members at the following link: <http://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/course/view.php?id=307>

<http://nhs.stopthepressure.co.uk/>

<https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/pressure-ulcers-revised-definition-and-measurement-framework/>

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