

# The Pan-Pacific Pressure Ulcer Forum and the AWMA Venous Leg Ulcer Forum

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The Australian Wound Management Association (AWMA), the Australian Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel (APUAP) and the Venous Leg Ulcer Guideline Development Committee (VLUGDC) will host the inaugural Pan-Pacific Pressure Ulcer Forum and the Venous Leg Ulcer Forum in Canberra on 16–17 October 2011. During the Forum, the revised *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prediction, Prevention and Treatment of Pressure Ulcers* and the *Clinical Practice Guideline for the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers* will be launched.

Clinical practice guidelines (CPG) are “systemically developed statements to assist practitioner decisions about appropriate health care for specific clinical circumstances”

1. The benefits of clinical practice guidelines for practice, patients and practitioners are generally well acknowledged. The benefits lie in the fact that they aim to:

*... improve the quality of health care, to reduce the use of unnecessary, ineffective or harmful interventions, and to facilitate the treatment of patients with maximum chance of benefit, with minimum risk of harm, and at an acceptable cost*<sup>2</sup>.

Underpinning guideline development is a systematic review of the research evidence and evaluation of the strength and relevance of that evidence to the clinical topic of interest<sup>3,4</sup>. Guidelines also consider and incorporate expert consensus statements in the recommendations for clinical practice that result<sup>3</sup>. The drafting of guidelines commences usually with input from small, multidisciplinary, expert working groups, but expands to involve consultation and review from as many interested persons as possible<sup>4</sup>. Guidelines are then tested in a variety of clinical settings to determine their effectiveness and reviewed on an ongoing basis<sup>3,4</sup>.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)<sup>2</sup> outlines nine principles for guideline development and evaluation and they are summarised as:

1. Guidelines should focus on outcomes.
2. They should be based on the best available evidence and state the strength of evidence in their recommendations.
3. The method used to synthesise the available evidence should be the strongest applicable, but this will depend

on the judgement, experience and good sense of the group developing the guidelines. Evidence from a high-level study does not automatically result in a good clinical recommendation.

4. Guideline development should be multidisciplinary and should include consumers.
5. Guidelines should be flexible and adaptable to varying local conditions.  
They should include evidence relevant to different target populations and geographic and clinical settings, take into account costs and constraints, and make provision for accommodating the different values and preferences of patients.
6. Guidelines should be developed with resource constraints in mind. They should incorporate an economic appraisal, which may be helpful for choosing between treatment options.
7. Guidelines are developed to be disseminated and implemented, taking into account their target audiences. They should also be disseminated in such a way that practitioners and consumers become aware of them and use them.
8. The implementation and impact of guidelines should be evaluated.
9. Guidelines should be revised regularly.

The AWMA established a Pressure Ulcer Interest Subcommittee in 1996 and this committee was charged with the task of developing evidence-based guidelines for the prediction and prevention of pressure ulcers. The resultant guidelines were published in 2001<sup>1</sup>. The impact of these guidelines has had wide and significant consequences for improving patient care outcomes and reducing pressure ulcer prevalence nationally<sup>5-8</sup>. In 2007, the AWMA began the task of establishing an APUAP in line with similar international groups. The APUAP is currently reviewing and expanding the 2001 guidelines. The multidisciplinary VLUGDC was formed following a venous leg ulcer consensus meeting in 2007. In 2009, the committee applied to the NHMRC for approval to develop external (national) guidelines and this was granted<sup>9</sup>. The NHMRC principles for guideline development have been adopted in the current development of the AWMA guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

Over the past two decades, clinical practice guidelines for pressure ulcers and venous leg ulcers have emerged from a variety of international organisations. Moreover, most of these guidelines draw their evidence from the same body of literature. However, not all nations have the resources

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to engage in guideline development. It was these latter considerations and the desire to work towards worldwide guideline consensus that prompted the AWMA to extend an invitation to our neighbour nations to partner with us in the development of the APUAP *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prediction, Prevention and Treatment of Pressure Ulcers*. A Pan-Pacific Pressure Ulcer Alliance between AWMA and aligned peak bodies in New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and China was established. A similar partnership between the AWMA and the New Zealand Wound Management Association was formed for the development of the *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers*.

It is with much excitement, therefore, that we announce the inaugural Pan-Pacific Pressure Ulcer Forum and the Venous Leg Ulcer Forum which is to be held 16–17 October 2011 in Canberra during the spring Floriade Festival. The Forum will be attended by representatives from guideline development partner countries and will bring together health practitioners, administrators, line managers, policy makers, scientists and consumers. The forum will provide an opportunity to gain information on guideline development, implementation, audit processes, standards for safety and quality, as well as recommendations for pressure ulcer and venous leg ulcer prevention and management.

We extend an invitation to all to come and experience an exciting event in the national capital during “Australia’s Celebration of Spring” – Floriade.

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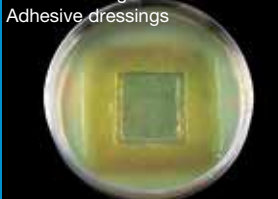


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