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**"Beyond the Cushion" Pressure Care and Occupational Therapy- the theory underpinning the practice.**

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**Background:** Due to an aging population, pressure ulcer prevention and management is an area of increasing interest for health care professionals. OT's are required to understand and apply the theory behind pressure ulcer prevention and the mechanical principles of support surface pressure redistribution. This knowledge underpins OT intervention including the assessment of pressure ulcer risk using appropriate tools, the teaching of pressure relieving techniques and the provision of appropriate equipment including wheelchairs, beds, chairs and heels. Research conducted by the authors found that many OT's feel that they do not have the necessary theoretical knowledge and skills required when working with people who have pressure care issues.

**Aim:** To present the key theories and knowledge required by OT's for effective intervention in pressure care.

**Approach:** To investigate and collate the body of theory required to increase OT's theoretical knowledge, skills and competence in pressure care. The key components identified included theoretical information on the aetiology of pressure ulcers; pressure, shearing and friction; pressure ulcers stages; intrinsic and extrinsic factors impacting on pressure ulcers; Waterlow assessment tool; the OT process and mechanical properties of foam, air, gel and combination pressure products.

**Results:** OT's require a sound understanding of pressure ulcer prevention theories as the basis for their clinical reasoning. This theoretical information was presented in a workshop format. The pre and post workshop evaluations showed participants overall confidence rose from 35% to 93% as a result of attending the workshop.

**Conclusion:** This improved theoretical base allows for more accurate identification of pressure risk by OT's and the subsequent implementation of preventative strategies, as well as more effective intervention strategies for patients who have an existing pressure ulcer. This results in better outcomes for patients and cost savings for health care providers.