



WELSH WOUND NETWORK
RHWYDWAITH CLWYF CYMRU

SHARING EXPERIENCES OF LIVING WITH WOUNDS

The Welsh Wound Network is a partnership between clinicians, academics and industry. At the heart of this partnership is the drive to improve the clinical care of people with, or at risk of wounds. The Welsh Wound Network would like to thank the individual who kindly agreed to share their story of having a pressure ulcer to reinforce the impact such wounds have on our lives. The Welsh Wound Network welcomes all comments from people who know the reality of living with a wound. We will also look to extend our Network to directly involve the public.

MY FIRST SORE "WOUND"

After suffering a spinal cord injury 23 years ago following an road traffic accident I would like to think I have been very skin conscious and successful as I never had a pressure sore during this time, with morning and evening skin checks everyday of every year. After having gone through the patient Education Program at the Midlands Centre for Spinal Injuries I was left with haunting images of severe pressure sores which made me even more determined not to get one.

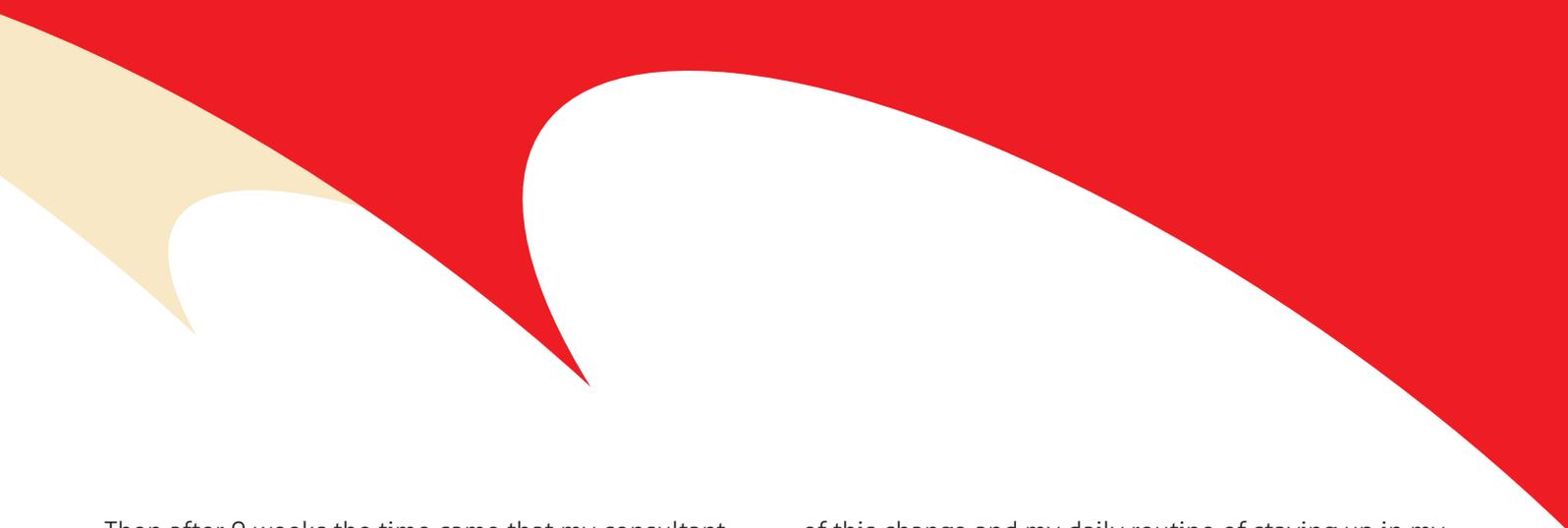
Then in July this year, following a small split in my groin and what I first thought was just superficial damage to my skin, my groin broke down leaving an area of 4cm x 2.5cm with a covering of slough which would not dry up. At this point I thought a couple of days off the wound would be all I needed and boy was this a wrench for someone who had not spent more than a day in bed over the last 23 years. A statistic I was proud of but something which did not stand me in good stead for what lay ahead! After three days of no change I called my local District Nurses for their opinion and maybe some kind of magical dressing so I could get back up ASAP and get out of this position of self incarceration.

I was told by my nurse I was going nowhere until the slough had gone and then the healing process could start (not what I wanted to hear).

Over the coming weeks it was a test of will power and mental strength as once we had finally debrided the slough from the now named "Wound" with a cocktail of different dressings I was left with a pressure sore 1cm deep!

I had now established a well oiled routine with the help of my wife, some modern technology and our home comforts, although this did not stop the near temper tantrums born out of frustration due to my self-imposed captivity in bed. Mentally I was taking it two days at a time as this is when the dressing was changed and throughout this I just willed for the happy positive sounding voices of my wife and District Nurse as they hopefully commented on improvement which would draw me nearer the finish line.

Story continues on reverse →



Then after 9 weeks the time came that my consultant at MCSI and District Nurse both concurred I could start a mobilization program and start building up my times out of bed. Strangely I was torn between staying in bed longer and getting up I knew I had to get over this otherwise I would never get up! The only way I could find out if my skin would hold out was by sitting on it again. On writing this I am sitting for 3-4 hours and touch wood everything is looking fine.

I now look back over the past months and a phrase runs through my head - "Accept Change". I have now been a tetraplegic for 23 years and just as everybody ages my body is also ageing. I now have to be one step ahead

of this change and my daily routine of staying up in my chair for 14-16 hours a day or sometimes longer have now changed. I always took it for granted that my skin was fine which until now it always had been. This has been a hard lesson to learn and a severe reality check but definitely one I'm taking seriously.

WHAT TO DO TO AVOID GETTING A PRESSURE ULCER

- Ask for help about pressure ulcers from your nurse or doctor.
- Know your 'bony bits' - pressure ulcers usually start over the bones in your bottom or heels.
- Check your skin around the bony bits for areas that feel 'different' from normal - skin may be red, feel hot or there may be a cut in the skin.
- If you have a sore bottom or heel tell someone that it hurts, don't ignore it as avoiding pressure ulcers is always better than trying to cure them!
- Move regularly when sitting or in bed. If you find it hard to change position ask for help.
- If provided use your equipment such as cushions and special mattresses.
- Keep your skin clean, dry and moisturised.
- Feed your skin with well balanced meals and drink plenty.
- Tell everyone around you about pressure ulcers.
- Be aware if someone you care about may be in danger of developing pressure ulcers.