

SAFE Heel Protocol in Orthopedic Unit

Lupie Bautista MSN, RN-BC, CWOCN • Zinaida Hozdic, BSN, RN • Christopher Lemus, BSN, RN • Ludy Franco, BSN, RN • Elaine Juan, BSN, RN

Background

Pressure injury prevention is a concept of patient safety. Hospital acquired pressure injury (HAPI) increases healthcare costs, risk for litigation, and complications, and cause reduced quality of life (Delmore et al., 2019). Ramundo et al. (2018) identified heels as second to sacrum for the most frequent site of HAPI occurrence during hospitalizations due to limited mobility or lower extremity surgery.

Purpose

A care bundle in the form of a SAFE Heel protocol (**S**- Surgical/orthopedic patients, **A**- Assessment of heels, **F**- Foam heel dressing and **E**- Elevation of heels) was evaluated for preventing heel HAPIs in the orthopedic unit and incorporated a patient-centered approach.

Methods

Correlational design method was used to measure if each part of the SAFE Heel protocol that is a nurse driven intervention can prevent heel HAPIs when performed consistently and as a bundle for all types of orthopedic patients.

Results

The Fitted Regression Model of the SAFE Heel protocol concluded that heel skin assessment ($\beta = 2.10, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [.58, 3.63]$) and use of foam heel dressing ($\beta = 0.97, p < .00, 95\% \text{ CI } [.78, 1.16]$) predicted consistent elevation of heels preventing heel HAPIs in the unit.

Discussion

The SAFE Heel protocol promotes nursing use of preventative interventions when structured in a bundle. Compliance of the SAFE Heel protocol is also encouraged since it is integrated into the nursing workflow process.

Implications for Practice

The SAFE Heel protocol directly impacts patient safety. It provides an effective standardized method of interventions that has been tested and proven to improve patient outcomes.

References

Delmore, B., Ayello, E. A., Smith, D., Rolnitzky, L., & Chu, A. S. (2019). Refining heel pressure injury risk factors in the hospitalized patient. *Advances in Skin & Wound Care, 32*(11), 512–519. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.ASW.0000579704.28027.d2>
 Ramundo, J., Pike, C., & Pittman, J. (2018). Do Prophylactic foam dressings reduce heel pressure injuries? *Journal of Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing, 45*(1), 75–82. <https://doi.org/10.1097/WON.0000000000000400>

