RAISING THE PROFILE OF SKINCARE AMONG HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

A drive to increase knowledge and skills in dermatology among non-specialist professionals incorporated a range of education, training and support

AUTHORS Barbara E. Page, BN, DipN, RGN, is dermatology liaison nurse specialist, Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline, Fife; Sheila Robertson, RGN, is dermatology liaison nurse specialist, Victoria Hospital, Kirkaldy, Fife.

THE PROJECT
This project focused on creating innovation and leadership across the whole spectrum of dermatology nursing.

We identified that there was a lack of dermatology training for all healthcare professionals throughout Scotland. As a result, we secured funding and facilitated education and training within Fife for 60 primary care nurses with the aim of enhancing dermatology care provided in the community. In addition, we secured funding from NHS Education for Scotland to develop a diploma in dermatology at the University of Stirling. This is a multidisciplinary course aimed at nurses, junior doctors, community pharmacists, GPs and podiatrists.

A teaching/training tool was developed for nurses and carers working with older people, entitled ‘Promoting Healthy Skin in Older People – the Basics of Skincare’. We also designed a dermatology insert for child health records.

Outcomes
Since primary care nurse training in dermatology has been established, health visitors now have their own eczema clinics within GP practices, and practice nurses now run their own clinics for patients with dermatological conditions.

The first cohort of students complete the diploma course in July 2007.

The teaching tool for promoting healthy skincare in older people gained recognition when it won a nursing journal award in 2006. We are working with the Care Commission to introduce the pack to every care setting in Scotland after a pilot study in Fife.

The audit report on the dermatology insert created for addition to the personal child health record has been completed and it is now being distributed widely throughout the UK. The National Eczema Society and the British Association of Dermatologists have supported this project.

The Scottish Dermatological Nursing Society has been established, with the purpose of ensuring equality of access and quality of care for all patients with dermatological conditions throughout Scotland. Good practice is shared together with nursing standards and protocols.

Skin Care Campaign Scotland is now established and is run by patients for patients. All of the above initiatives have been ongoing over the last 5–6 years.

AIM
The aim of all these activities was to enhance the care offered to dermatology patients and to highlight this Cinderella service. While 15–20% of all GP consultations are skin-related, only five days are dedicated to dermatology in medical training. Outside the specialty, healthcare professionals are not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to care for patients.

BENEFITS TO PATIENTS
Education of primary care nurses has allowed patients with dermatological conditions to be seen at an early stage by a more knowledgeable practitioner with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver care in the community.

The teaching tool for promoting healthy skincare in older people focuses on skin integrity, thereby ensuring they receive preventive care. Patients’ quality of life is also of paramount importance in this training. We are collaborating with the Care Commission to roll the programme out across Scotland.

Barbara Page was invited to present a paper on ‘Promoting Healthy Skin in Older People’ to an international audience at the World Congress of Dermatology in Argentina in September 2007. The teaching resource was well received and copies have been sent to Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, India, the US, Malta, Norway and other European countries.

The Scottish Dermatological Nursing Society, which was founded in 2003 by Barbara Page, aims to ensure that patients are the focus of nursing care, by ensuring they receive expert dermatological care.

Each region in Scotland is now represented on the society’s committee and an annual conference takes place in April with a regional meeting in September.

The multidisciplinary Skin Care Campaign Scotland was founded by a steering group consisting of dermatologists, nurses, a GP and patients with dermatological conditions. Healthcare professionals gave support to ensure the group would be run by patients for patients. Barbara Page was on the founding group and after six years remains as nurse adviser.

FUTURE PLANS
All these projects are ongoing and all have been recognised and will be disseminated not only in the UK but also throughout the wider world.

The teaching tool for promoting healthy skin care in older people will be available throughout the UK through the Care Commission website by the end of 2008. Now further developed, it is entitled ‘Skin Integrity: The Basics of Skincare – A Framework for Study Reflection’, and has been awarded RCN accreditation. It is a framework for learning for individual nurses and will be available throughout Scotland. The Scottish Dermatological Nursing Society regional representatives have agreed to disseminate it throughout their areas.

FIND OUT MORE
For additional information on this project, contact Barbara Page at barbara.page@nhs.net or Sheila Robertson at sheila.robertson@fahd.scot.nhs.uk.