Pressure sores – or bed sores as they’re often known – are caused by pressure being applied to the skin for long periods of time. After a while, the pressure can cause cuts to the skin and tissue just below it which is extremely painful. Not washing properly or leaving it untreated can make the condition worse.

Since 2007 – 2008, the amount spent on the home help budget, which pays for care workers to visit elderly and vulnerable patients in their own homes, has been cut from £1.7m to £1.3m while the amount of people needing this type of care has increased considerably. In real terms, it means each patient has an average of £951 spent on them per year compared to £1,188 in 2004. And while this doesn’t seem like a huge reduction, one of the most serious consequences is that care workers are now only spending an average of 15 minutes with their patients.

The Leonard Cheshire Foundation, the country’s leading provider of voluntary disabled care, revealed in a recent survey that visits of 15 minutes or less had increased by 15% over the last five years and said the practice should stop.

One of the main reasons why this situation’s developed is because of cuts to the NHS budget. Around half a million patients live in care homes and depend on this level of care, while an additional million receive care in their own homes. Numbers are rising steadily as the population continues to grow older while councils are having their funding levels decreased. The fall-out from this is that an increasingly larger percentage of these patients are developing bed sores as carers can’t spend enough time with each patient.

It’s estimated elderly and disabled patients need forty minutes to wash, dress and eat breakfast in the morning and many of them rely on help to complete these tasks properly. Often bed sores occur when these patients are left to their own devices when help’s no longer available.

The problem’s not exclusive to home care or nursing homes though as many older patients have developed pressure sores while in hospital from being kept in a stationary position for too long. Sitting and lying down without being moved or turned can cause pressure sores. In some areas, the situation’s so bad that six-fold increases in pressure sores have been reported.

Medway Maritime Hospital was a the centre of a bed sore tragedy when an 86-year-old patient, Maureen Clayton, died very painfully from bed sores after staying in the hospital for 11 weeks. Mrs Clayton’s son said she had not been turned once during her entire stay at the hospital and she developed MRSA leading to her bedsores becoming infected.

Medical guidelines advise patients to be turned or moved every four hours while in hospital, particularly if they’re elderly or infirm and have mobility issues to prevent pressure sores. The condition tends to affect areas like the elbows, knees and ankles mainly but can develop anywhere on the body.

What’s Next?

If you are worried about a loved one who has developed a pressure sore whilst in care, then speak to our medical legal team about a possible claim for compensation. Call free, anytime on 0800 122 3130 or request a call back and someone from our clinical negligence team will call you back when it’s convenient for you.

If you are worried about making a claim or would like to speak to someone on behalf of a loved one, then please feel free to speak to us. Our advice is free and you’re not obligated to pursue a claim through us.

Mercury Legal Online | 0800 122 3130 | www.Compensation.co.uk

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