On February 11, 2014 the Erie County Medical Center (ECMC) hosted “Wound Day.” The day shift began with “Skin Nurses” from each floor of the hospital being recognized as “Skin Heroes” for the work they do in recognizing skin issues, enhancing wound treatment and preventing pressure ulcers. Each of the Skin Heroes was given a T-Shirt signifying their role in the skin program at ECMC.

Wound Day, held on a quarterly basis, involves a 100% skin assessment audit of the hospital’s patients, documenting the information and submitting the results to the National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI). This is a major endeavor and requires all available nursing hands on deck, regardless of title or position. The atmosphere on the units was one of camaraderie as well as excitement over the desire to do a good job. Each of the units competed with one another, each wanting to have the least number of skin related issues.

Planning for Wound Day began in 2013 after the Wound Prevention Team recognized the importance of a “back to basics” approach to patient care and the need to include all staff members in pressure ulcer prevention care. The hospital has shown continued progress on reducing the rate of pressure ulcers but recognized that more could be done.

As a Gold STAMP Coach I had the privilege of accompanying one of the wound teams as they completed their rounds, led by one of the Skin Heros and the RN Team Leader of the Unit. Each patient’s skin was assessed from head to toe for any indication of a pressure ulcer. Symptoms ranging from areas of redness to open pressure ulcers were examined, care plans were discussed and revisions made as needed. Education was provided to the patients on the importance of skin care and prevention measures they could self- initiate.
These rounds were a wonderful opportunity to provide guidance in wound care and prevention as well as an opportunity to encourage nurses to use their critical thinking skills to address skin issues. The bedside review emphasized the need to consider other clinical needs of the patient and the impact of their medical condition on the risk for skin breakdown. Instruction during the rounding process emphasized proactive skin care versus reaction once a problem has occurred.

A teaching clinic held in the afternoon provided an opportunity for the skin heroes to enhance their knowledge and skills related to wound vacuums. The nurses practiced applying the wound vacs on each other and were critiqued for potential improvement. A demonstration on a dressing change with bridging was completed, pressure ulcer management was discussed and appropriate product utilization reviewed. Further discussion of Pressure Ulcer staging, prevention, treatment and proper positioning was conducted. The program concluded with a review of appropriate pressure ulcer documentation in the EMR.