

Stirling's Pressure Ulcer/Sore Severity Scale (SPSSS)

Assessment Overview

Assessment Area

ICF Domain:

Body Function

Subcategory:

Functions of the Skin

You Will Need

Scoring:

The scale has 5 stages (0-4), where zero represents no clinical appearance and four indicates full thickness skin loss with extensive destruction extending to bone, tendon or joint capsule.

The two-digit version includes more detailed ulcer descriptors.

Training:

To ensure basic understanding of skin and soft tissue anatomy and relevant physiological concepts, practitioners should undergo training prior to using the scale.

Summary

Stirling's Pressure Ulcer Severity Scale is used to describe the severity of pressure ulcers. It was derived from previously published UK scales developed by a consensus panel of national tissue viability experts.

This clinician-administered observational scale has 5 stages ranging from stage 0 to stage 4, where:

0. = no clinical evidence of a pressure sore
1. = discoloration of the intact skin
2. = partial-thickness skin loss or damage involving epidermis and/or dermis
3. = full-thickness skin loss involving damage or necrosis of subcutaneous tissue but not extending to underlying bone, tendon or joint capsule
4. = full-thickness skin loss with extensive destruction and tissue necrosis extending to bone, tendon or capsule.

The scale has several variations, with the most common being the 1 and 2-digit scales, where the nature and severity of the ulcer are graded.

Availability

Worksheet: Can be found [here](#).

Assessment Interpretability

Minimal Clinically Important Difference

Not established in SCI

Statistical Error

Not established in SCI

Typical Values

Distribution of pressure ulcers using the Stirling wound classification:

	Frequency (%)
Stage 1	3 (5.4)
Stage 2	12 (21.4)
Stage 3	37 (66.1)
Stage 4	4 (7.1)
Total	56 (100)

(Wellard & Lo 2000; n=60; mean (SD) age: 43 (18) years; admission to hospital with 1+ pressure ulcers, mean (SD) length of stay in hospital: 91 (98) days)

Measurement Properties

Validity – **Low** to **Moderate**

When the scales were treated as continuous variables:

Low to Moderate correlation with:

Norton scale: $\rho = -0.28$

Waterlow scale: $\rho = 0.38$

Braden scale: $\rho = 0.03$

When the scales were treated as categorical variables
(e.g. at risk, high risk, very high risk):

Low to Moderate correlation with:

Norton scale: $\rho = 0.14$

Waterlow scale: $\rho = 0.32$

Braden scale: $\rho = -0.08$

(Wellard & Lo 2000; n=60; mean (SD) age: 43 (18) years; admission to hospital with 1+ pressure ulcers, mean (SD) length of stay in hospital: 91 (98) days)

Number of studies reporting validity data: 1

Reliability

Not established in SCI

Responsiveness

Floor/Ceiling Effect:

Not established in SCI

Effect Size:

Not established in SCI

Number of studies reporting

responsiveness data: 0