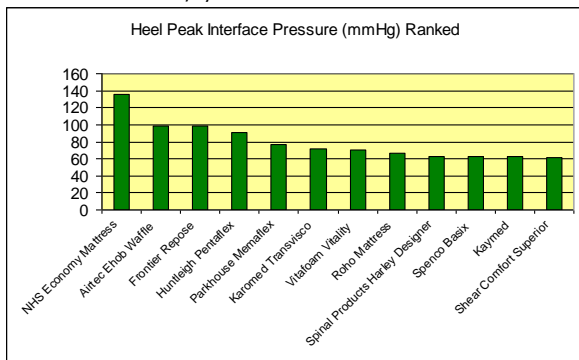


## Pressure Reducing Overlays: Shear Comfort Sheepskin the Best

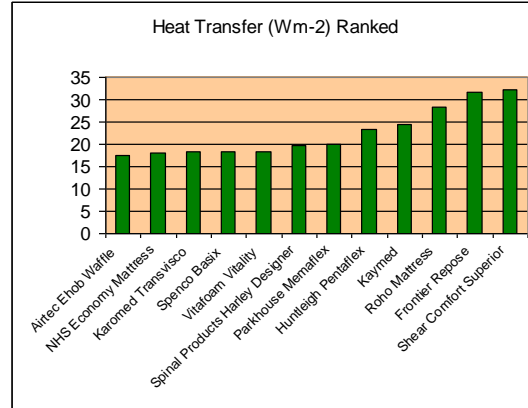
Natural sheepskin used to be used by the nursing profession as the material of choice for pressure care. However, sheepskin usage decreased as concerns around infection control emerged amongst difficulties of decontamination. To meet these concerns, manufacturers created artificial sheepskins from artificial wool or from natural wool woven into an artificial backing. These products, because of the lower density of wool, were not particularly effective for pressure care, and foam and air filled products took their place. At the turn of the century Australian technology caught up with the medical needs, and Shear Comfort appeared, which is still natural sheepskin, but has been treated to withstand washing repeatedly at 80°C. You now get the best pressure care product with the infection control/decontamination concerns taken care of.

The first scientific analysis of Shear Comfort with other commercially available overlays was carried out for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, and published in 2004 in MHRA 04101 *Pressure Reducing Overlays*. For skin integrity, three physical properties of patient support surfaces are important: the ability to dissipate pressure, heat, and water vapour (sweat). In this study the values were measured for these properties for 11 different overlays placed on top of a standard NHS Economy Mattress, as compared with the mattress on its own. Pressures were looked at under the heels and under the pelvis.

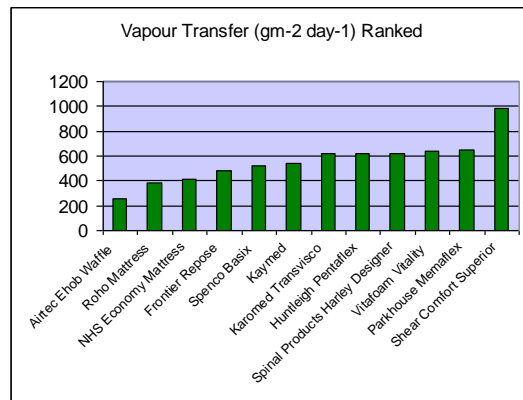
Shear Comfort reduced the pressure by 41% under the pelvis, and by 54% under the heels (for the latter, producing the lowest mean pressure reading of the 11 overlays):



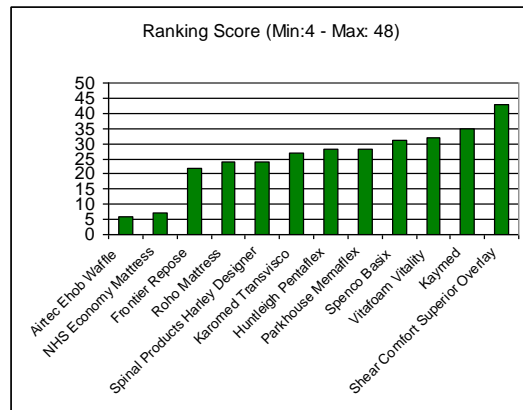
Shear Comfort's heat transfer properties were the best of all the overlays, with a 77% improvement as compared with the standard mattress:



Vapour dissipation is very important for skin health: if moisture builds up, the skin is at risk of maceration. Of the 11 overlays, Shear Comfort was by far the best surface for vapour transfer, and 139% better than the standard mattress:



Comparing the four tests, using a score of 1 for the worst performer, and 12 for the best, Shear Comfort scored 43 out of a possible 48 maximum points:



These results show what many who have been in nursing for a long time already know: natural sheepskin is one of the best tools around for pressure. With Shear Comfort, you now get the best pressure care product with the infection control/decontamination concerns taken care of.