Caulfield General Medical Centre is using pressure ulcer models, moulded from a 74-year-old patient, to help its staff and student nurses improve their wound dressing skills. The Decubitis Wound Care models, that look very real, are funded through a RACV Foundation grant. They clearly show the four stages, classified according to the severity of the wound, of decubitus ulcers.

Decubitus ulcers, or pressure sores, can be extremely serious, especially for older residents. They range from a mild pink coloration of the skin, that disappears in a few hours after pressure is relieved on the area, to a very deep wound extending to—and sometimes through—internal organs and into bone.

A decubitus ulcer can form on any area of tissue that lies just over a bone. These areas include the spine, coccyx or ‘tailbone’, hips, heels and elbows.

The weight of the person’s body presses on the bone, the bone presses on the skin and tissue that covers it and the tissue is trapped between the bone structure and a bed or wheelchair surface.

This situation compresses the blood vessels in the skin and underlying tissues. The tissue then begins to decay from lack of blood circulation.

Decubitus ulcers can also occur from friction—by rubbing against something such as a bed sheet, cast or brace—or from prolonged exposure to cold.

Caulfield General Medical Centre Acting Manager of Nursing Education Angela Casey said the models would be used to refine the skills of CGMC’s 450 staff nurses and to give 80–100 nursing students hands-on practice to improve their assessment and dressing skills.

‘Nurses and students will use the models to demonstrate skills in wound management, classification, staging and assessment of pressure ulcers,’ Ms Casey said.

‘Some great results have already been achieved through our Take the Pressure Off campaign and this is an extra tool to ensure we identify and manage pressure ulcers early.’

Ms Casey said she hoped to use the models in collaboration with the Alfred and Sandringham Hospitals to expand their teaching programs in pressure ulcer prevention.