

Saving Limbs and Lives: Building Out an Ontario Lower-Limb Preservation Strategy

By Mike Setterfield, MSc; Lynn Scholey, RKin MSc

There are over 1,200 non-traumatic major lower-limb amputations every year in Ontario, the majority resulting from complications of vascular disease, diabetes or both.¹ This equates to one lower-limb amputation every 7 hours, and results in approximately \$140 million in direct amputation health-care costs annually.² Ontario amputation rates are high, particularly in Northern and Indigenous communities, compared with many other jurisdictions.^{3,4} Up to 85% of major lower-limb amputations are preventable through effective initiatives that include:^{3,5,6}

- Early identification and screening of at-risk feet and lower-limbs
- A collaborative and seamless interprofessional team approach to patient care across care settings
- Culturally safe patient education
- Continued education for health-care providers

Jurisdictions that have successfully implemented lower-limb preservation initiatives have shown tremendous reductions in amputation rates.^{7,8,9} Further, it is estimated that successful implementation will save millions in health-care dollars annually.^{6,10,11}

The Strategy

Ontario Health – CorHealth Ontario is collaborating with a provincial Advisory Committee

to develop a multi-year provincial Lower-Limb Preservation Strategy (the strategy). The Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Ahmed Kayssi, is composed of vascular and wound care experts, primary and community care providers, patient and family advisors and system partners. The strategy aims to facilitate a co-ordinated, integrated and patient-centred approach to lower-limb preservation care in Ontario. Strategy goals are to:

1. Reduce avoidable, non-traumatic major lower-limb amputations in Ontario
2. Improve equitable access to high-quality best-practice early screening, cardiovascular risk factor modification and integrated lower-limb wound care

To learn more about the strategy, please visit <https://www.corhealthontario.ca/llp>.

Strategy Resources

A foundational strategy resource is An Ontario Framework for Lower-Limb Preservation (the framework). The framework includes:

- System-level care pathways that highlight key care activities for the prevention and management of lower-limb wounds
- Minimum care requirements to standardize lower-limb preservation care

- Key considerations for a model of care to guide the organization and integration of lower-limb preservation services

The framework provides a roadmap for lower-limb preservation providers, organizations and champions to optimize the delivery of integrated, best-practice lower-limb preservation care aimed at positively impacting patient outcomes while reducing health-care costs.

Of note is the new Pathway for Preventing and Managing Vascular Wounds (the pathway). This pathway is a practical system-level pathway developed in collaboration with Wounds Canada. The pathway is aligned with the Wounds Canada “Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Peripheral Arterial Ulcers”¹² and highlights key care activities for evidence-informed best-practice vascular wound prevention and management in a practical one-page infographic.

It defines a vascular wound and strongly recommends that every lower-limb wound should be considered a vascular wound until proven otherwise.

A Change Package has also been developed to accompany the framework. It is a working document that provides actionable change ideas, tools and resources from which lower-limb preservation providers, organizations and champions can adopt and/or adapt, based on local/regional needs and opportunities, to improve lower-limb preservation

care delivery, services and outcomes, and to measure and evaluate change success.

Included in the change package is a Patient Toolkit of provincial, national and international tools and resources on lower-limb, foot and wound prevention and management for providers to share with patients and families to support their education and self-management.

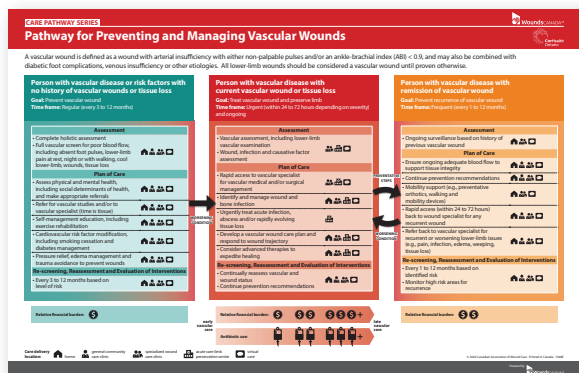


Building Out the Strategy

To begin implementation of the strategy, Ontario Health – CorHealth Ontario is partnering with demonstration programs from across diverse regions of the province.

Demonstration programs will consist of a local/regional collaboration table of interested lower-limb preservation champions and stakeholders from across the care continuum, along with patient and family advisors with lived experience. With guidance from Ontario Health – CorHealth Ontario, utilizing the framework and change package, demonstration programs will be tasked with:

- mapping current-state patient care journeys
- identifying local/regional needs
- prioritizing change opportunities
- developing, implementing and evaluating change action plans



Knowledge sharing and dialogue among demonstration programs will be facilitated through a provincial community of practice. Through the demonstration phase, key barriers and critical success factors for implementation will be identified, as well as opportunities to better align current policy to support best practice. Demonstration programs will share with Ontario Health – CorHealth Ontario an evaluation of their change

A demonstration program

is a regional, interprofessional group of primary, home, community and specialized health-care providers who are formally committed to collaborate and implement changes to improve outcomes for individuals at risk for non-traumatic major lower-limb amputation.

action plans as well as lessons learned to support the co-development of a plan for provincial implementation and adoption of the strategy.

Lower-limb preservation providers, organizations and champions are encouraged to use the framework to guide the planning, development and implementation of lower-limb preservation services. Working together, we will continue to improve access to high-quality, best-practice early screening, cardiovascular risk-factor modification and integrated lower-limb wound care, and reduce avoidable, non-traumatic major lower-limb amputations.

To learn more about the strategy and demonstration program engagement, please visit <https://www.corhealthontario.ca/llp> or contact Mike Setterfield at mike.setterfield@ontariohealth.ca. ■

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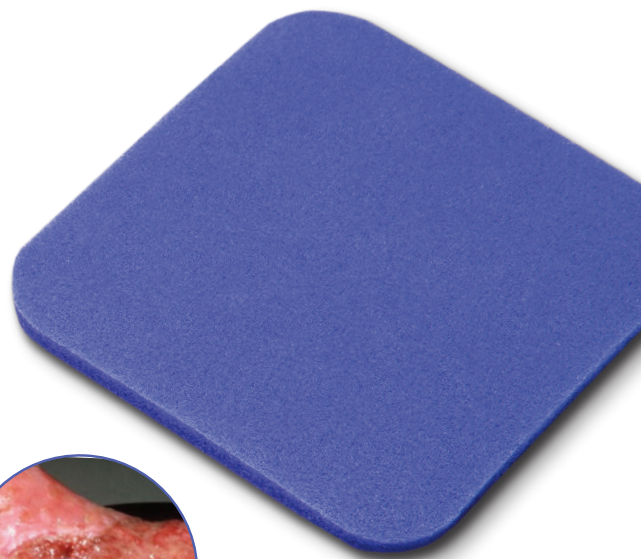
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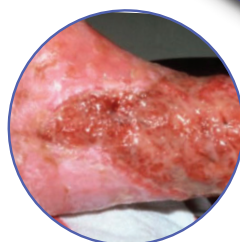
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