

Overview of Wound Care Education in Canada



BY David H. Keast

Formalized education for wound care clinicians in Canada is in its infancy. Wound caring is a complex activity that requires the co-ordinated skills of many disciplines. While discipline-specific education has been present to some extent in some medical subspecialties and in nursing, specifically for enterostomal therapists, interdisciplinary education is novel not only for wound care but also in other areas of health care. The Canadian Association of Wound Care (CAWC) supports and encourages this approach. All continuing health educational activities should conform to the principles of adult learning. These include:

- Recognition and valuing of existing funds of knowledge and experience
- A representative planning group
- Prior needs assessment
- Clearly defined educational objectives
- Participatory learning format
- Opportunity for evaluation
- Promotion of life-long learning skills

Educational objectives should encourage knowledge acquisition, skills development and attitudinal change. Tools that facilitate the translation of knowledge into practice must be included in any activity.

The pyramid shows a conceptual model for wound care education

first proposed by Dr. Gary Sibbald. As one advances up the pyramid, the level of knowledge and skills becomes more complex. A description of the levels follows with current activities.

Level 1 – Traditional Knowledge-based Courses

This level represents the traditional knowledge-based courses. These may be as simple as local in-service education in an institution or may occur on a regional or national level and are usually offered to large groups.

The national conference of the CAWC has provided education for wound-care clinicians from novice to expert for nine years. Industry has also sponsored many knowledge-based courses for their customers. Many of these courses have received continuing medical education (CME) accreditation. To supplement this, the Education Committee of the CAWC developed the Seminar Series (S1, S2 and S3). The S1 course provides basic knowledge in wound bed preparation and

the management of pressure ulcers, venous leg ulcers and neuropathic diabetic foot ulcers in a workbook-based interactive format. The goal is to offer the series regionally in Canada every year.

Level 2 – Skills Development

Skills development requires hands-on, small-group workshops. The S2 course offered by the CAWC provides exposure to debridement, lower



David H. Keast, MSc, MD, FCFP, is at Parkwood Hospital, St. Joseph's Health Care, London, Ontario. He is Chair of the Education Committee of the CAWC.

limb assessment and compression therapy skills. The S1 and S2 courses have now been offered in Toronto and Vancouver, and more are planned for other regions of the country. Actual skills practice must occur under the guidance of an experienced clinician and within the scope of practice and institutional policies of the learner. Many agencies or institutions have developed specific skills training for their employees.

Level 3 – Preceptorship, Self-directed

Learning, Mentoring

The next level links knowledge and skills to practice. This may take the form of problem – or case-based-learning, observerships or mentoring. The S3 component of the CAWC S-series is currently under development. This will take the form of a self-directed learning workbook and resources to aid

in the completion of individual learning goals. A one-day problem-based course with a practice-reflective exercise for family physicians has been developed and has received CME credits. Industry also sponsors preceptorships with expert clinicians or teams.

Level 4 – Certificate Courses

The eight-month International Interdisciplinary Wound Care Course (IIWCC) offered through the University of Toronto utilizes residential weekends and self-learning modules to develop critical appraisal skills and advanced clinical knowledge. The selective component links knowledge to the learner's practice. This course is for expert clinicians and is designed to create wound-care opinion leaders through intensive education.

Other certificate courses are offered through commu-

nity colleges or privately. Few of these offer the intensity of the IIWCC.

Level 5 – Postgraduate Level Courses

A Masters of Health Science in wound care is under development at the University of Toronto, which will link to the IIWCC with the option of continuing up the educational ladder to the broader and more comprehensive expertise required by an opinion leader. Candidates would not only acquire discipline-specific advanced knowledge but also pursue skills in adult education, epidemiology or research and health promotion.

Level 6 – Expert Panel (Knowledge Translation)

As a guide for the educational activities, an expert panel (international, national, and regional) would help interpret the evidence base. Part of this process may include formalized guideline

evaluation, educational research and evaluation of health-care professional behavior and patient outcomes.

The last level of the pyramid will link with several groups of experts:

- The World Union of Wound Healing Societies Education Committee
- The Canadian Association of Wound Care Board of Directors
- The International Interdisciplinary Wound Care Course Faculty
- The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario Best Practice Advisory Board

These groups could review guidelines and help establish education activities at all levels based on selected curriculum, as well as foster education and patient-care outcome research. ☺

Tools that facilitate the translation of knowledge into practice must be included in any educational activity.



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