

A New Initiative: The World Wound Care Alliance (WWCA)

According to John Macdonald, president of the Association for the Advancement of Wound Care (AAWC), adequate, medically sound care for acute and chronic wounds is arguably the most urgent, unaddressed health need in the developing world.

The cascade from infection to systemic complications, hospitalization, amputation and death is inevitable if there is no effective intervention. In addition to the etiological factors that lead to chronic wounds, risk factors in the developing world are compounded by parasitic, bacterial, and viral exposure, road accidents, and the indiscriminate use of guns. Perhaps the most poorly understood chronic wound endemic to these areas is the "tropical ulcer"—a leg wound that presents undefined by the usual etiologies (e.g., ischemia, diabetes) normally seen in Western cultures—which represents a debilitating disease process that is minimally understood. Plus, the face of the AIDS tragedy evolving in these nations can be visually defined in the chronic wound.

The World Wound Care Alliance (WWCA) was born of the AAWC board's collective determination to address this global wound-care crisis. Following are some frequently asked questions and answers regarding the WWCA's mission and vision.

What is the WWCA?

The WWCA is an initiative within the mission of the AAWC and is dedicated to bringing the science of wound care to underprivileged persons in North America and to developing countries. This entity is similar to a non-governmental organization (NGO) for international health care.

Currently a pilot study is being carried out by a group

of AAWC members and University of Miami Department of Epidemiology and Public Health professors and graduate students. The purpose of the study is to define templates for logistics, public health needs, and teaching protocols. It is hoped that this team will visit a pre-selected site within the next few months.

How will the WWCA function once the pilot study is complete?

The WWCA will act as an agency to facilitate opportunities for teams of medical professionals to volunteer for short-term (five to seven days) visits to pre-selected medical sites throughout the Western hemisphere. The goal of these visits will be twofold: (1) to present an outlined teaching curriculum to both medical personnel and to the surrounding community, and (2) to teach while seeing patients in a clinical setting. Each site will have an On-site Co-ordinator in addition to a WWCA North America-based Director.

Who will be on the medical teams?

Each team will consist of approximately five volunteers. Ideally, varied specialties will be represented (e.g., nursing, physical therapy, podiatry, and medicine.) Teams of friends and associates will be encouraged. Responsible family members also may accompany volunteers.

Will the WWCA provide teaching materials for volunteer preparation and on-site teaching?

Yes. Educational material will be developed by the AAWC to prepare the volunteer in the broad aspects of tropical wound assessment and treatment. A flexible, constantly revised teaching outline will be provided. Detailed volunteer "tool kits" will be provided to assist in preparation.

Who will be eligible to volunteer?

Initially, any AAWC medical professional member in good standing will be eligible to volunteer for a team assignment. We hope to announce a call for AAWC volunteers in 2007. We anticipate and look forward to collaboration with Canadian wound-care associations, including the CAWC and CAET, after the program is underway.

What will be the volunteer's financial responsibilities?

Volunteers pay for transportation to and from a program site. Many sites provide room, board, and daily transportation for volunteers once they arrive. Because the AAWC is registered as a non-profit organization with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, most travel and living expenses and related costs incurred by a U.S. volunteer are a tax-deductible donation. Should the program extend to Canadian associations, AAWC would investigate this matter and disclose whether a similar tax-deduction applies in Canada.

What about insurance?

WWCA volunteers, in their capacity as teachers rather than the primary providers of service, should not find liability insurance to be an issue. The WWCA also adheres to all local registration requirements in each country of service. On occasion, this means that volunteers will have to submit documentation about their education, licensure, and certification status. Travel and/or health insurance will be the responsibility

of the individual volunteer.

What are the expected responsibilities of the WWCA volunteer?

Each team of volunteers will be expected to file a written summary of their experience. It is believed that these reports will be a catalyst for ongoing development. Each year, the AAWC will provide a forum for WWCA volunteers to report on their experiences.

As a Canadian, how can I get involved?

Please watch the AAWC's Web site, www.aawcone.org, for updates about the WWCA. Information about WWCA can be found in the News section at the bottom of AAWC's homepage.

We are currently continuing to collect donations to help fund at least one or more pilot studies. AAWC collected nearly \$9,000 from AAWC members, non-members and representatives from corporations in eight hours of exhibit time at the Symposium on Advanced Wound Care (SAWC) this past April. Anyone who believes in this mission is encouraged to contribute. Contributions can be made at the AAWC Web site. Under the Contact Us menu, you will find an option to contribute to AAWC. Donations can also be made by phone at 866-AAWC-999. Checks made payable to AAWC WWCA Fund can be mailed to AAWC, Attn. WWCA Fund, 83 General Warren Blvd., Suite 100, Malvern, PA 19355, USA. ☺

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