

Dressings Destined for Disposal Support Wound Care Centre in Mexico

By
 José Contreras-Ruiz, MD,
 Heather Trowell, BSc OT(c),
 Penny Bickerton, RN, IWCC,
 Susan Christensen, RN,
 Patricia Coufts, RN,
 Marjorie Friedheller, RN, BScN, MSc(c)

The Interdisciplinary Wound and Ostomy Care Centre at the “Dr. Manuel Gea González” General Hospital in Mexico City is a clinic dedicated to education, research and patient care. This hospital depends on the Health Secretariat for its operational budget and serves all those patients without any other form of health-care coverage.

Care is a challenge. The average income of the patients treated at this centre is two minimum wages (approximately \$10 CAN/day).

The budget given to the hospital by the health authorities does not cover all of the advanced dressings these patients need. The only material provided for the last six years has been normal saline, tape, gauze, povidone iodine and surgical scrubbing soap. Patients have had to pay for their own dressings, and if they came to the clinic they had to leave with nothing but gauze and povidone iodine. Home care is not even close to being a reality.

A few wound-care companies have been working with the centre in Mexico to create a “wound care closet.” These companies provide their products at the lowest cost they can manage, and the clinic sells them without making any profit. While this has been of great help, it has not entirely solved the problem because a lot of patients can’t afford even these lower-priced dressings—especially those needing the products that are the most expensive in each line.

Something was needed to fill the gap.

One of the most important advantages of the annual Canadian Association of Wound Care (CAWC) conference is the opportunity to network. Some time ago, while talking about this situation, some members of the CAWC mentioned how health-care policies in Canada created some “waste” that could be useful in clinics in developing countries. Some examples of this are

- dressings that have gone beyond their expiration date
- partially opened dressings that would otherwise be disposed of*
- the unused materials from an instrument tray that don’t come into contact with patients—which otherwise are destined for disposal*
- whole boxes of dressings that have gone to patient’s homes, even if unopened and not expired, that cannot be returned to the home-care agency



Wound-care patients in Mexico are receiving better care thanks to the generosity of Canadian companies and health-care professionals.

Through planning and the generosity of organizations and individuals, an

opportunity arose for collaboration to change this “waste” into a priceless resource in another setting.

Nurses from Canada have been actively saving all these dressings, bandages, wrappings, instruments, etc., and shipping them (at their own expense) to the Wound Care Centre in Mexico. As amazing as it may seem, this has allowed patients to receive a dressing change at least every time they come to the clinic. A single dressing change may seem insignificant, but it is not; once patients see the improvement provided by these products they often decide to invest their

scarce resources in the dressings prescribed for them. Furthermore, patients who come for the first time would otherwise have to be dressed with gauze, then sent to buy their dressing and then come back to be properly dressed, making the clinic very inefficient and creating inconvenience for patients. Another great advantage of this aid is that the centre can now make deals with the patient such as, "we can give you this one for free, but you must continue on with your treatment as per indicated ...," which encourages them to adhere to the plan of care. In the case of very poor patients, the centre can now even provide whole packages of dressings; however, this is the exception rather than the rule.

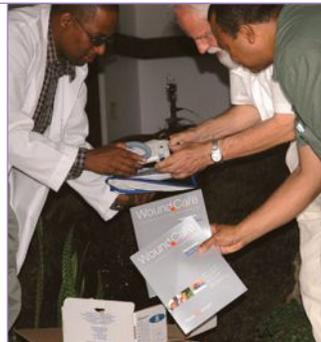
Thanks to the altruistic nature of these nurses and to the opportunity for networking provided by the CAWC, the centre is fully operational and providing state-

of-the-art wound care, even though it is located in a country that is far away from reaching Canada's stage of development. Once again the benefits of networking and the focus of the CAWC on connecting with the international wound-care community has provided a tangible benefit for patients abroad. ☺

Disclaimer: Policies regarding the use of outdated or opened dressings are left to the discretion of the clinicians in Mexico who receive these items.

Acknowledgements: Dr. Contreras-Ruiz would like to thank Sunita Coelho and Marilena Amarelo for having saved dressings during his stay at Women's College. Those dressings were carried to Mexico and allowed the clinic to care for patients for over a year.

Surplus Product Boon to African Partners



The CAWC solicits product to use in demonstrations at various educational programs, and as a result sometimes has surplus product. To prevent this product from going to waste, in 2007 the CAWC seized an opportunity to put the items to good use. Based on conversations with Daudi Mavura, the winner of the 2006 R. Gary Sibbald International Scholarship, the CAWC sent a shipment to the Regional Dermatology Training Centre (RDTC) in Moshi, Tanzania, at which Mavura is a faculty member.

The photo on this page shows Mavura and colleague Henning Grossman unpacking the boxes. Here are their comments:

"Greetings from a happy RDTC team in Moshi!

"Unbelievable, but the parcel safely arrived yesterday and was unpacked by members of our team today. It was enthusiastically received.

"Many thanks indeed. Not only the pocket Doppler but also the excellent supply of silicone, burn antimicrobial dressings and transparent adhesive films and others were very much welcomed."
— *Henning Grossman*

"We really need the leftovers because they will help in our daily wound-care management—especially Dopplers to confirm our diagnoses and for teaching purposes. We really need compression products ... to provide the compression required as well as ideal dressings." — *Daudi Mavura*

As a result of this experience, the CAWC is now working on a plan to become an official clearinghouse of product in Canada with the hope of providing it to legitimate wound-care organizations in countries in which the donation of product would result in improved patient outcomes. ☺