

Wound Care Certification of Nurses in Canada: How to Obtain Credentials and Employer Recognition

By Crystal McCallum, RN MCISc

As the education manager at Wounds Canada, each month I receive at least one email from an enthusiastic Canadian nurse asking how they can become “certified” in wound care. Unlike in the United States, where wound care certification programs are plentiful, in Canada, for nurses, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) is the only nationally recognized nursing specialty credentialing body. The CNA Certification Program offers 22 practice specialties for registered nurses and one for licensed/registered practical nurses. Specific to wound care, registered nurses can obtain a Wound Ostomy Continence Certificate (Canada) by successfully completing a rigorous exam. If successful, registered nurses can incorporate the specialty designation WOCC(C) into their professional signature—a legally protected credential that is renewable every five years. (For more information, visit the CNA website: www.cna-aiic.ca.)

Obtaining Recognition from Employers

While only CNA can issue “certification,” nurses can obtain recognition from employers by

registering for programs from organizations and institutions who have a track record for providing excellence in wound education. The following are a few of these options:

- The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Education Program (WOC-EP), an educational program of Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy and Continence Canada (NSWOCC), is a combined online and practical program that takes approximately 12 months to complete. Available to baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses only, this tri-specialty program prepares registered nurses to practise at a proficient level in the field of wound, ostomy and continence care. Upon successful completion of the program, registered nurses can add the NSWOC designation to their professional signature. As a natural extension, NSWOCC suggests that graduates proceed to writing the CNA exam to obtain the legally protected title of WOCC(C). For more information, visit the NSWOCC website: www.nswoc.ca.
- The Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto offers a “professional” master’s program in advanced wound care. This degree program (MScCH WPC) consists of five credits that can be completed in one year full-



time or over six years on a part-time basis. The program is described as a professional master's because it can be completed by health professionals who are working full-time. It is open to health professionals with an interest in wound care who have an undergraduate degree from a recognized university. Further information about the program and entrance requirements can be found at www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/program/mscch-wound-prevention-and-care-wpc/.

- Master of Clinical Science (MCISc) in Wound Healing program is a unique full-time graduate degree program at Western University in London, Ontario. This accredited program, which takes 12 months to complete, consists of academic, clinical specialty and research courses and is primarily completed using distance education methods, with six weeks of mandatory residency on campus. Those who achieve an overall average of 70%, complete 100 hours of clinical mentorship and pass a final clinical exam may use the designation MCISc-WH in their professional signature. Anyone proficient in English and with a bachelor's degree from a recognized university and at least a B standing in the final two years of their undergraduate program can apply for this program, which prepares registered health-care professionals of any discipline to practise at a proficient to expert level, depending on the expertise and experience the

student has when admitted to the program. For more information, visit the Western University website: www.uwo.ca.

- The International Interdisciplinary Wound Care Course (IIWCC) is a continuing education program that provides students with a certificate of completion from the University of Toronto. This online course (with two four-day residency periods), which takes nine to 12 months to complete, is open to registered health-care professionals of any discipline with proof of five years of relevant wound care experience. For more information, visit the Woundpedia website: www.woundpedia.com.
- Several colleges also offer continuing education programs in wound care of various lengths, from one day to one week. Programs vary in content and delivery methods and may or may not have a formal evaluation. Most programs are aimed at health-care professionals with a novice to advanced-beginner level of wound care knowledge and skill. Certificates range from attendance to participation to successful completion, each having a different value and meaning.
- The Wounds Canada Institute (WCI) offers a variety of cost-effective educational programs for health-care professionals of all disciplines. The current focus is to meet the educational needs of those who self-identify as at a novice to advanced



level relative to their skin health and wound management knowledge and skills. Programs combine online modules (courses) ± on-site skills labs ± live interactive webinars. Successful students receive a certificate of completion. For more information, visit the Wounds Canada Institute website: www.woundscanadainstitute.ca.

- Wounds Canada offers a selection of stand-alone live events for which students receive a certificate of attendance. For more information, visit the Wounds Canada website: www.woundscanada.ca.

Recommended Path to Becoming “Certified”

If you are a registered nurse in Canada, my advice is to follow these steps, in the order listed, to become “certified” in wound care:

1. Successfully complete the following Wounds Canada Institute programs, which provide a solid foundation for wound prevention and management in a range of areas:
 - a. Best Practice Approach to Skin Health and Wound Management: Knowledge (A100MNN)
 - b. Best Practice Approach to Skin Health and Wound Management: Knowledge and Skills (A100NWS)
 - c. Focus on the Prevention and Management of Pressure Injuries: Knowledge (A102MWN)
 - d. Focus on the Prevention and Management of Surgical Wounds Complications: Knowledge (A103MWN)
 - e. Focus on the Prevention and Management of Skin Tears: Knowledge (A104MWN)
 - f. Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills (A105MWS)
 - g. Focus on the Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills (A101MWS) **OR** Holistic Approach to Diabetic Foot Offloading: Knowledge and Skills (A108MWS)
2. Seek out mentorship opportunities within your workplace to enhance your knowledge and decision-making abilities and to become competent in your wound related knowledge and skills.
3. Successfully complete the WOC-EP program.
4. Successfully complete the CNA Wound, Ostomy and Continence Certification exam.
5. Seek out mentorship opportunities within and outside your workplace to become proficient in your wound related knowledge, decision-making abilities and skills.
6. Successfully complete the MCISc-WH graduate degree program at Western University, the MScCH WPC program at the University of Toronto and/or the IIWCC program at the University of Toronto to progress towards becoming an expert in the field of wound healing.

Continue to seek out new learning opportunities to keep your practice current. Consider becoming a mentor and getting involved in wound care research. 🇨🇦

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Wounds Canada Education:

The Wounds Canada line-up for 2019 so far covers a range of topics and formats, allowing individuals to choose the program that best suits their current learning needs.

Live events begin in April and run throughout the year.

April 12–13, Halifax, NS: 2019 Wounds Canada Spring Conference

A two-day continuing education event designed to support health-care professionals from a variety of disciplines who work with patients with wounds or those who are at risk for developing wounds, with sessions delivered by regional, national and international experts.

April 13, Halifax, NS: Wound Care for Primary Care Practitioners

An interactive half-day event that builds on the content of select Wounds Canada Best Practice Recommendation documents. Case studies and discussions will address differential diagnoses and common misdiagnoses as well as strategies for prevention and management for a variety of wound types.

May 31, Toronto, ON: Symposium Series: New Perspectives in Diabetic Limb Preservation

A one-day learning event that will include sessions on the medical management of patients with diabetic foot ulcers, vascular considerations, infection, wound management, offloading, the challenges of renal patients and more, delivered by national and international experts.

October 3–6, Niagara Falls, ON: 2019 Wounds Canada Fall Conference

Canada's largest wound-related event; four days of sessions, networking opportunities, poster presentations and access to industry partners for health professionals from a variety of disciplines.

Coming soon: Wound Care for Primary Care Practitioners Online

An online version of our popular Wound Care for Primary Care Practitioners, allowing busy professionals to access the modules anytime from anywhere. Stay tuned for launch date.

Details about these and other programs are listed on the Wounds Canada and Wounds Canada Institute websites, and new programs are added regularly. Check in often for updates.

