



# Wound Data in Canada: Finding Solutions to a Long-standing Problem

Commentary by Michael Stacey, MBBS, FRACS, Doctor of Surgery, Professor, McMaster University, Surgeon in Chief Hamilton Health Sciences

Planning for the appropriate level of health-care funding for any disease process is very dependent on accurate data that identify the burden of the disease in the population. Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) data have been identified by many researchers to be an underestimate of the extent of chronic wounds that exist within the Canadian population. The reasons for this underestimation include:

- these data come from coded databases and not from direct patient observation
- there is a lack of consistent criteria for assessing and diagnosing wounds and for how the data are collected and documented

Ideally, we need consistent definitions of the different types of wounds and consistent methods of data collection of wounds in all care settings.

Knowing that those data are collected in a consistent manner from direct patient observation and assessment would then enable the prevalence across the entire Canadian population to be extrapolated. This would also provide an accurate understanding of how much the CIHI data underestimate the extent of wounds in Canada and a better understanding of the burden of wounds in our different care settings, as well as in the community.

With accurate data, governments would be better informed of the extent of chronic wounds in Canada, and patient and professional wound care bodies could advocate for the appropriate level of funding to treat these patients. Wounds could then be funded in a manner that relates to their true extent, as is the case for other diseases such as cancer, heart disease and most other disease processes.

Two complementary articles in this issue of *Wound Care Canada* investigate the issues about which Michael Stacey has commented—through two different lenses but with much overlap—and offer achievable solutions. **Wound Prevalence in Canada: Reflection After 20 Years** by Pamela Houghton (p. 46) and **Accessibility of Wound Data in Canada: The Current Situation for Non-healing Wounds** by Virginie Blanchette and Janet Kuhnke (p. 60) look to the past, present an overview of the current situation in Canada and provide ways forward to improve the collection and use of data for all wound types and in all care settings.