

Creating a Community of Practice for Wound Care Leadership

By Heather Ibbetson, BN BA; Mariam Botros, DCh, CDE, IIWCC-CAN; Heather Orsted, BN ET MSc; Janet L. Kuhnke, RN BA BScN MSc ET; Cathy Burrows, RN, BScN, MScCH and Darren Levine, EdD

Wounds Canada is excited to announce the Wound Care Leadership Initiative. This initiative is actively engaging wound care leaders across the country to join a collaborative community of practice (CoP). The goal of this leadership initiative is threefold:

- 1. Identify key wound care leaders in the areas of clinical practice, education, policy, research and advocacy*
- 2. Assist these leaders, as agents of change, to improve the lives of people at risk or living with wounds*
- 3. Engage leaders in Wounds Canada initiatives to meet the evolving needs of Canadians*

To achieve these goals, Wounds Canada has undertaken several steps. Leaders were recruited and invited to join the CoP leadership initiative. Strategies were designed to assist in the cultivation of wound care leadership in a CoP. Leaders will be supported and mentored during their interactions with the CoP and will gain valuable insight and opportunities through Wounds Canada. This article will briefly expand on how Wounds Canada is implementing a CoP for wound care leadership.



A Community of Practice

Human beings are social and relational learners and can benefit from engaging in a community built around a common topic or shared passion. By sharing experiences, knowledge and challenges, leaders in the field of wound care can learn from each other how to understand issues and implement effective change. Wounds Canada observed that wound care experts often expressed feeling a disconnect from the broader community. Many wound care experts individually demonstrated leadership qualities but had limited means to build other skills within wound care. Additionally, many wound care experts received little support from the disconnected community and were often faced with both professional and institutional barriers.

Creating a CoP provides a space for connection, learning and knowledge generation.^{1,2} Each community creates a pur-

pose and goals that are specific to a particular cause. The field of wound care offers a unique community beneath the health-care umbrella, encompassing geographical and professional diversity.

Smith, Kempster and Wenger-Trayner highlight that a CoP is an important factor in both knowledge evolution and leadership development.³ For instance, sharing experiences within the CoP may lead to the exploration of common themes in the leaders' practices. This dissemination of knowledge leads to further CoP development through collective understanding and growth. Through this interconnectedness, each member of the CoP gains leadership skills that they can bring into their personal practice. Each member can then simultaneously refine their personal practice and continue to share with the CoP, creating a continuous and interconnected cycle of development and growth.³

The Wound Care Leadership CoP will provide participants with an opportunity to share and explore the unique experiences—both successes and barriers—surrounding the prevention and management of wounds. Participants will do this through their collective and frequent discussions to explore the themes and strategies within wound care leadership. Leaders can build relationships that enable them to learn from each other and grow as they share resources, experiences, stories, tools and ways of addressing recurring problems.² Additionally, during the sessions and networking, participants will have an opportunity to:

- Solve challenges surrounding practice change or barriers to best practice
- Request information or resources to guide or improve leadership practice
- Seek insight from peers and mentors

- Grow their confidence in wound care leadership
- Discuss new developments in their personal leadership or practice
- Collectively identify opportunities and gaps in both personal and institutional environments

Methodology

Planning the Leadership CoP

Cambridge, Kaplan and Suter describe CoPs as “dynamic social structures that require ‘cultivation’ so that they can emerge and grow.”⁴ Wounds

Canada partnered with Darren Levine, a consultant and associate faculty member at Royal Roads University, to design a wound care leadership initiative that would provide the necessary elements to create a CoP (Table 1). Cathy Burrows, a consultant and past president of the Wounds Canada board with extensive expertise in the field, is collaborating with Levine to provide clinical guidance along with the mentors.

According to Heather Orsted, one of the initiators of the program, “The most successful lead-

ers don’t have a job; they have a passion. I have that passion, and if I’ve learned anything in my career, it is that you require support from people who share your passion, your experience. My vision for this initiative is to enable support and collaboration for wound care leaders, whether they be health-care professionals, patients or caregivers. We all need support to follow our passion, we are all part of the same team and by collaborating together, we can build a better future!” (see Figure 1).

Table 1: Key Elements of a CoP⁴

CoP Recommendations	Wounds Canada’s Action
Connect people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact and provide a shared context for people to communicate in a way that builds understanding and insight.	Recruited and connected leaders from a diverse geographical and professional range of backgrounds, as well as patients and caregivers.
Enable dialogue between people who come together to explore new possibilities, solve challenging problems and create new, mutually beneficial opportunities.	Created an interactive platform for dialogue to occur that includes various methods of leader engagement.
Stimulate learning and leadership growth by serving as a vehicle for authentic communication, mentoring and self-reflection.	Created a virtual platform (meetings and forum) to act as the vehicle for authentic engagement. The initiative team and mentors continue to solicit feedback to ensure authentic dialogue.
Help people improve their practice by providing a forum to identify solutions to common problems and a process to collect and evaluate best practices.	Structured to allow the exploration of current leadership practices, barriers and solutions.
Introduce collaborative processes to groups and organizations to encourage the free flow of ideas and exchange of information.	Structured to allow for participants to share ideas and information both in virtual meetings and on a forum.
Help people organize around purposeful actions that deliver tangible results.	Virtual meetings and forum discussions will assist leaders to organize around areas of learning and practice change.
Generate new knowledge to assist in transforming practice to accommodate change in needs and technologies.	Leaders assigned to one of two groups based on expertise. These groups will each work to create dialogue and generate practice change in their areas of expertise.



Figure 1: Heather Orsted's Vision

Recruiting Leaders

Wounds Canada sent out a call for leaders in a March 2021 e-blast newsletter. The call provided a brief description of the Wound Care Leadership Initiative. In order to create an integrated CoP, health-care providers, patients, and families or support persons were encouraged to apply. Professional applicants were asked to provide a statement of interest and two references. Referees were

emailed a questionnaire exploring the applicant's leadership and wound care experience. Patients, families and support persons were asked to elaborate on their experiences with wounds and share their vision for wound care leadership. Participants were selected based on exceptional practice or personal experiences, along with strong references.

The first cohort of 27 successful applicants is representative of the range of professions and experiences that co-exist within the wound care community. Members include chiropodists/podiatrists, occupational therapists, patients and care partners, physicians, physiotherapists, registered nurses, physicians and surgeons. Regional diversity is represented, with participants from six provinces and one from outside Canada. Leaders were

To authentically create a vibrant and inclusive CoP, all stakeholders, from patients to professionals, must be included.

asked to select a clinical area that best suited their experience and strengths. To provide the leaders with the opportunity to build trusting relationships within the CoP, a non-disclosure agreement was circulated and signed by all individuals participating in the initiative.

Engaging Leaders

Wounds Canada held a virtual initial orientation meeting on June 1, 2021. The goal of this meeting was to introduce the Wounds Canada team, share the initiative purpose and goals, and allow participants to become familiar with their peers. The initiative is set to launch in September 2021 and will consist of four quarterly meetings. To ensure that each person could participate to the fullest potential, we utilized participant feedback and scheduled each meeting to last no more than 90 minutes. Meetings are recorded and available online; however, leaders are encouraged to attend the meetings live to gain the most benefit through active participation.

Engagement within a CoP must be multidirectional and dynamic. The initiative has been structured to provide participants with a variety of opportunities for leadership empowerment and growth.⁴ The virtual meetings include smaller breakout groups,

An integrated team operates as a collective, focusing on a specific purpose. These teams do not rely on a hierarchical model, but instead are founded on the inclusion of all voices and relevant experiences regardless of status outside of the group.⁵

interactive polls and stimulating conversation topics. For example, leaders were asked to share one of their challenges in order to better determine everyone's perspective and the common themes for future meetings. A discussion forum allows participants to continue their leadership journey between meetings by providing a confidential space to share and problem-solve around successes and barriers to practice change. Participants are also encouraged to engage in opportunities within Wounds Canada to contribute to important projects, including educational and advocacy-based initiatives. These opportunities offer participants the ability to grow their leadership skills while giving back to the wound care community.

Mentorship

Mentorship is an essential component of creating a CoP.³ Mentors can contribute to the CoP by utilizing their own experience to become enablers of social learning who provide support and direction. Wounds Canada selected mentors based on their previous experience in the field of wound care and demonstrated leadership in Wounds Canada initiatives. Additionally, mentors were selected from a pan-Canadian and interprofessional perspective. Mentors will be present during both meetings and forum interactions. Currently, the mentors include the following distinguished experts: Joel Alleyne, Sunita Coelho, Pat Coutts, Janet Kuhnke, Andrew Springer and Marlene Varga.

Evaluation

The Wound Care Leadership Initiative is a pilot program and will be evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively on its ability to meet its goals.

Leadership Growth and Development

To date, feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Wounds Canada, through online surveys and virtual discussions, will be gathering data on the impact of the initiative on their personal leadership growth. Their feedback has and will continue to be used to plan future meetings and other forms of participant engagement.

Integration into Wounds Canada

Wounds Canada encouraged participants to take an active role within the organization by offering opportunities for engagement. Thus far, participants have engaged in a symposium and have submitted their names to be included in future activities. Participant engagement will continue to be identified and recognized for the impact of contributions.

Sustainability

Wounds Canada is actively soliciting feedback from both the Wounds Canada team and participants through online surveys and virtual discussions to ensure the initiative is meeting its objectives. The evaluation of the initiative will be ongoing and multifaceted to ensure sustainability into the future.

Conclusion

Wounds Canada has created a Community of Practice in Wound Care Leadership. This will enable wound care leaders to engage in dialogue, further develop their leadership skills, contribute to Wounds Canada and, ultimately, influence the national wound care community. 

References

1. Hazy JK, Uhl-Bien M. Towards operationalizing complexity leadership: How generative, administrative and community-building leadership practices enact organizational outcomes. *Leadership*. 2015;11(1):79–104.
2. Wenger-Trayner E, Wenger-Trayner B. *Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction*. 2015. Available from: <https://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/07-Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice.pdf>.
3. Smith S, Kempster S, Wenger-Trayner E. Developing a program community of practice for leadership development. *Journal of Management Education*. 2019;43(1)62–88. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1052562918812143>.
4. Cambridge D, Kaplan S, Suter V. *Community of practice design guide: A step-by-step guide for designing and cultivating communities of education in higher education*. 2005. Retrieved from: <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2005/1/community-of-practice-design-guide-a-stepbystep-guide-for-designing-cultivating-communities-of-practice-in-higher-education>.
5. Deans I. The 5 secret ingredients for a successful integrated team. National. 2016 July 29. Retrieved from: www.national.ca/en/careers/our-culture/inside-national/detail/the-5-secret-ingredients-for-a-successful-integrated-team/amp/.



2021 Events:

Mark Your Calendar!

Wounds Canada is pleased to announce three virtual events in 2021. Mark your calendars now so you don't miss out!

1. Limb Preservation Symposium – Virtual Event:
Available any time on demand

2. Fall Conference – Virtual Event:

Thursday, October 21 through Saturday, October 24, 2021

Our annual fall conference with experts from across Canada presenting a national perspective on key issues in wound care. *This event includes a one-day French-language wound symposium on October 24.*

3. Pressure Injury Symposium – Virtual Event:

Thursday, November 18, 2021

A one-day event addressing key issues on pressure injury prevention and management.

Register now at www.woundscanada2021.ca

- Registration for all three virtual events: \$75 + tax (*member price*) or \$95 + tax (*non-member price*)
- Registration and Wounds Canada Membership bundle: \$120 + tax (*a combined savings of \$55!*)

Learn, network and win prizes



WoundsCANADA.ca

Membership Has Its Privileges



Become a Wounds Canada Member Today!

Wounds Canada is excited to launch its revamped members portal, which will give all members exclusive access to the following **NEW** features:

- **An Image Bank:** view and download images for personal or educational use
- **Conference Sessions Gallery:** view scientific presentations from the Wounds Canada conferences
- **Webinar Gallery:** access engaging on-demand webinars with leading wound care specialists

Members will continue to have exclusive access to:

- Discounted registration fees for all conferences
- Quarterly member newsletters
- Discounts on wound care tools and resources available through our eBoutique

Being a member also gives you the opportunity to apply to sit on the Wounds Canada Board of Directors to let your voice be heard!

How do I join?

Visit www.woundscanada.ca/become-a-member today to take your wound care knowledge to the next level!

- Individual Annual Membership: \$100.00 CDN
- Student/Retiree/Patient/Lay Caregiver Membership: \$50.00 CDN

Find out more about us at www.woundscanada.ca.

Register today to take full advantage of these exclusive benefits!

Find us on social media

