

Creating a unified approach to best practice in wound care



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Since 2016, Wounds Canada has been updating all of its best practice recommendations documents with the goal of conveying a standardised approach to skin health, wound prevention and wound management. The documents are based on the best available evidence, emphasising that the patient is the core of the healthcare team. Following the Wound Prevention and Management Cycle, these documents are wound-type specific and guide clinicians through a five-step process from assessment through to evaluating outcomes. The suite of documents, which currently includes papers on skin anatomy and physiology, basic wound care, pressure injuries, skin tears, diabetic foot ulcers, surgical wounds and burns, continues to grow, with papers on arterial and venous ulcers and moisture-associated skin damage forthcoming. As part of presenting an unified approach to care, Wounds Canada has adopted the principles and recommendations presented in these documents as the basis of a new suite of online clinician education programmes offered through the Wounds Canada Institute.

In all areas of health care, having professionals who are committed to addressing the healthcare needs of patients and the community will result in a stronger health system and will lead to enhanced clinical and health-related outcomes (World Health Organization, 2010). In early 2016, Wounds Canada began working on a complete revision of its previously published best practice recommendations documents with the goal of unifying healthcare professionals under one concept of care, based on best practice and focused on the patient as the centre of care. This goal led to the development of a system that can be applied to any wound type; the Wound Prevention and Management Cycle (WPMC).

The Wound Prevention and Management Cycle

The WPMC outlines a process that emphasises patient-centred care [Figure 1]. This process guides clinicians through a logical and systematic method for developing a customised plan for the prevention and management of wounds. The WPMC begins with the initial assessment and follows

through to a sustainable plan targeting self-management for the patient.

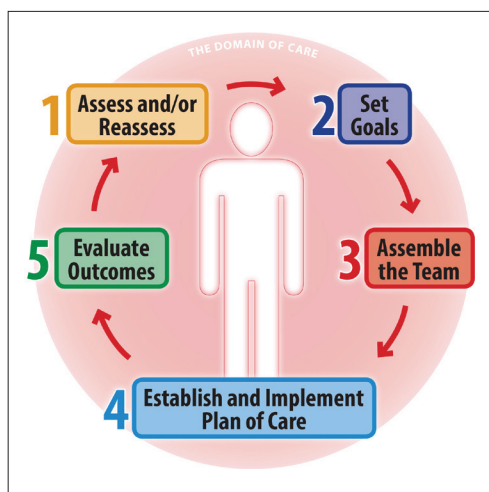
The five steps of the WPMC are: assess and/or reassess, set goals, assemble the team, establish and implement a plan of care, and evaluate outcomes. Each step is then broken down into specific recommendations to support care. If a team reaches step five and goals of care have not been met, clinicians return to step one of the WPMC and reassess the patient, the wound and the environment to find causes or co-factors that still need to be addressed to promote wound healing. The WPMC applies to the three healing statuses of wounds: healing (causes and co-factors addressed), non-healing (causes or co-factors must be addressed before healing can occur) and non-healable (causes and co-factors cannot be addressed). The WPMC re-works the older wound bed preparation model to focus on more holistic, patient-focused care.

Wounds Canada's best practice recommendations

The Wound Prevention and Management Cycle became the basis for revising existing best practice recommendations (BPRs) and

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Figure 1. The Wound Prevention and Management Cycle.



creating of several original documents. BPRs take existing clinical guidelines and put them into a format that is useable by clinicians at the bedside. These resources synthesise information into specific recommendations for care that support healing and quality of life concerns.

Wounds Canada began by revising its two foundational documents: ‘Skin: Anatomy, Physiology and Wound Healing’, and Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Wounds. These two documents contain information that is pertinent to all wound types.

The wound-specific BPRs that followed the foundational documents were either based on existing Wounds Canada BPRs, in which case, the existing material was updated with new evidence and reorganised into the framework of the WMPC, or were developed using the best available evidence and expert opinion. All of the BPRs were authored by interdisciplinary writing teams of leading experts from across Canada. While the authors of the BPRs are Canadian, the information and recommendations presented in these resources are taken from both national and international research guidelines and take into consideration the need for clinicians to be aware of cultural and spiritual factors affecting the patient. These wound-specific BPRs refer readers back to the foundational documents for any information that is not unique to the wound type being discussed. Since these resources are available online, they are dynamic, being updated with new links and information as it becomes available.

Resource materials have been developed to facilitate the integration of the best practice articles into practice, such as product pickers to address dressing selection, offloading devices

and control of oedema.

There are three principles that guide the BPR papers to support effective prevention and management of skin breakdown:

- The use of the Wound Prevention and Management Cycle, regardless of the specifics, to prevent and manage skin breakdown
- The constant, accurate and multidirectional flow of information within the team and across care settings
- The patient as the core of all decision making.

Wounds Canada has published seven BPRs published since 2017. These are:

- Skin: Anatomy, Physiology and Wound Healing
- Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Wounds
- Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Pressure Injuries
- Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Skin Tears
- Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers
- Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Surgical Wound Complications
- Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Burns.

The first three papers have been translated into French, with the other four in progress. Wounds Canada continues to grow this suite of wound resources. Three additional papers are in various stages of development, including BPRs for the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers and BPRs for the Prevention and Management of Arterial Ulcers (to be published in 2019) and BPRs for the Prevention and Management of Moisture-associated Skin Damage (to be published in 2020).

These BPR resources have become the foundation of all of Wounds Canada’s educational programmes and resource material, and are prerequisite reading for all students.

The Wounds Canada Institute

In 2018, Wounds Canada announced the launch of the Wounds Canada Institute (WCI), which gives healthcare professionals or caregivers at all levels and in any discipline access to flexible, interprofessional education. The

Table 1. Programmes currently offered by the Wounds Canada Institute.

Nurses and allied healthcare professionals	Primary care practitioners and prescribers	Unregulated care providers
Best Practice Approach to Skin Health and Wound Management: Knowledge	Wound Care for Primary Care Practitioners	Skin and Wound Care for Unregulated Care Providers
Best Practice Approach to Skin Health and Wound Management: Knowledge and Skills	Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) for Primary Care Practitioners	
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers: Knowledge	The Advances in the Management of Diabetic Foot Complications for Primary Care Practitioners	
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills	Holistic Approach to Diabetic Foot Offloading: Knowledge and Skills	
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Pressure Injuries: Knowledge		
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Surgical Wound Complications: Knowledge		
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge		
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills		
Holistic Approach to Diabetic Foot Offloading: Knowledge and Skills		
Focus on the Prevention and Management of Skin Tears: Knowledge		

WCI is committed to supporting its students learning needs and professional growth in the areas of skin health and wound care with a dynamic, interactive and collaborative learning experience.

The BPRs are prerequisite reading for all students enrolled in the institute, providing the foundation necessary to fully engage and interact with the material in each programme. WCI programmes take the form of online modules, webinars, skills labs and other live learning events. Students enroll in a programme of interest and can complete the various components of that programme at their own pace, within a 24-month timeframe. It typically takes students between three and twelve hours to complete all components, depending on the programme. The range of learning styles the WCI caters to ensures that students have access to education that best suits their level of expertise, interests, available time and resources. Upon completing all components of the programme, students receive a certificate of completion.

The programmes offered by the WCI were all developed and are delivered by Canada's top wound experts. The WCI faculty provides a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to skin health and wound care that emphasises the patient as the centre of care. This enables learners to optimise their patients' outcomes and make effective use of limited system resources.

The WCI does not accept third-party funding to support or develop its courses or programmes, and programme content does not promote any brands or commercial names.

The WCI currently offers programmes for nurses and allied healthcare professionals, primary care practitioners and prescribers, and unregulated care providers [Table 1].

An additional programme, Focus on the Prevention and Management of Moisture-associated Skin Damage: Knowledge, is currently in development and will be offered soon.

Looking ahead

Wounds Canada is committed to developing and providing evidence-based education

Box 1. Overview of a Wounds Canada Institute programme.

Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills

The Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills programme is based on the concepts contained within Wounds Canada's forthcoming Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Treatment of Venous Leg Ulcers document and includes the following components:

- Two online modules
- One full-day on-site skills lab
- One interactive webinar

The programme allows students to practice skills relevant to the prevention, assessment and management of venous leg ulcers under the guidance of expert faculty. These skills include:

- Conducting an ankle-brachial pressure index
- Using a monofilament
- Conducting mobility and gait assessment
- Calf-muscle pump exercises
- Choosing and applying compression bandages and garments


Following the skills lab, a wrap-up webinar invites students to reflect on their ability or inability to implement the knowledge and skills they learned during the programme.

This programme is aimed at nurses and allied healthcare professionals who self-identify as novice or advanced-beginner related to the prevention, assessment and management of venous leg ulcers. Upon completion of all three components of this programme, students will receive a certificate of completion.

in the areas of skin care and wound management. Through developing a unified model for care based on the Wound Prevention and Management Cycle and supported through accessible resources (BPRs) and education (the WCI), Wounds Canada is positioning itself as a key supporter of evidence-based, patient-focused care across disciplines and care settings, thus encouraging optimal patient outcomes in the areas of skin health and wound management.

About Wounds Canada

Wounds Canada is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the advancement of wound

prevention and management by being the leading knowledge mobilisation organisation relating to wounds in Canada. Wounds Canada's efforts are focused on four key areas: education, research, advocacy and awareness, and partnerships. For more information, please visit www.woundscanada.ca. 

References

World Health Organization (2010) *Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice* (Human Resources for Health No. WHO/HRH/HPN/10.3). WHO: Switzerland. Available at: www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework_action/en/ (accessed 23.05.2019)