

2020 Pre-budget Consultation Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

January 24, 2020

Prioritize Wound Care to Reduce Hospitalizations and Health-care Costs

Wound care costs Ontario at least \$1.5 billion annually in direct costs¹

Recommendation:

Wounds Canada urges the Government of Ontario to prioritize wound care, ensuring that patient care is equitable, timely, non-fragmented and accessible across the province.

To improve patient care, reduce hospitalizations and lower spending on wounds, key actions must include:

- Developing policies that prevent wounds such as pressure injuries (bed sores) and infected wounds in acute and home care settings
- Providing access to wound care, products and technology that are evidence-based and improve patient outcomes
- Increasing wound-related education for health-care providers, patients and families
- Ensuring Ontario's interprofessional teams include wound experts
- Implementing wound care pathways from hospitals to home and community care with set measurables, monitoring and evaluation

Implementing these key actions would improve patient outcomes and reduce spending on wounds:

- On a daily basis, people are admitted to hospitals for infected wounds and are dying from pressure-related injuries (bed sores). Every four hours an amputation due to diabetic foot ulcers takes place, and new research shows this number is on the rise.
- In Ontario evidence-based wound care is not integrated and equitably accessible to patients. For example, interprofessional teams often do not have access to basic wound care products such as advanced dressings. Health-care professionals do not have access to standard of care technology and practices that could detect and prevent pressure injuries from developing.



- With investment in better wound prevention and management earlier on in the patient journey, the Government of Ontario could improve patient outcomes, reduce hospitalizations and readmissions, and quickly cut health-care costs related to wounds.
 - ♦ For example, **adoption of best practices could reduce wound costs in home care by 40–50%.**² Approximately 50% of home care visits involve wound care.

A person's hospitalization and home care needs increase with complex or severe wounds.

- A person with a diabetic foot ulcer that heals as expected spends an average of 5 days in the hospital, emergency rooms and clinics, whereas a diabetic foot ulcer that results in an amputation increases this time to an average of 70 days.³
- A surgical wound that becomes infected increases a person's hospitalization by 11 days in Canada.
- Despite the fact that at least 70% of all pressure injuries are preventable, 25% of people in any care setting in Ontario have a pressure injury on any given day. Pressure injuries can extend a hospital stay by 4 to 11 days.⁴

Wound care has not been prioritized in Ontario or across Canada. We can do better.

- The Government of Ontario has taken initial steps: draft wound care pathways are currently being developed, and funding for offloading devices has been provided to help prevent amputations due to diabetic foot ulcers. **However, more must be done.**
- Wound care pathways, education and other supports are standard in many nations such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Netherlands and Sweden. Yet Canada has fallen far behind its peers by not keeping up with advances in standard of care technology and implementing best practices.
- Ontario needs better wound care policies to support best practice and pathways to ensure appropriate outcomes, access to wound care experts and basic education for patients and health-care professionals (from nurses and family physicians to surgeons and chiropodists) and access to evidence-based technology and products.

Education Needed for Health-care Professionals to Prevent and Treat Wounds

Recommendation:

Wounds Canada urges the Government of Ontario to help educate health-care professionals on best practices in wound prevention and management by providing \$810,000 annually in funding for 3,000 individuals to fill 4,400 course registrations through the Wounds Canada Institute.

Wound care costs Ontario at least \$1.5 billion annually. With proper education in best practices, wound care costs would be reduced by improved patient outcomes and experiences.

- Wounds come in many levels of severity. Many are preventable. Some are simple and heal quickly on their own. Others that should heal quickly become complex because of patient factors or inadequate treatment.
 - ♦ A small percentage, usually in patients with multiple health issues, can take years to heal, if they heal at all, unless treated by an expert interprofessional team.
- Improved clinician knowledge about appropriate early interventions would reduce the number and severity of all types of wounds.

The Wounds Canada Institute offers accredited and cost-effective education programs

- Wound care is often treated as a specialty, when in fact wounds are everywhere and often go undetected, even when patients are in long-term care homes, hospitals or doctors' offices. Unfortunately, many health-care professionals are not properly trained to identify early-stage wound-related issues and do not know how to treat wounds or where to refer patients.
- There is demand for greater education: For example, there are over 170,000 registered nurses and registered practical nurses in Ontario, yet minimal training for wound care is provided in their schooling, even though they often provide wound care on a daily basis.

- The Wounds Canada Institute has been working to address this issue by providing affordable online courses and in-person skills labs across Ontario to a wide range of health-care professionals, from nurses and family doctors to chiropodists and surgeons.
- Wounds Canada urges the Government of Ontario to expand the availability of these programs. An investment of \$810,000 in one year would allow 3,000 health-care professionals to access 4,400 spaces in a wide range of programs.
 - ♦ The online component allows flexibility to professionals who can take the program from home or office as their schedules allow. The skills lab programs, which require onsite attendance by clinicians, can be scheduled strategically and in locations to best serve the needs of Ontario's clinicians.
 - ♦ If there is demand, the programs can easily be scaled up to accommodate more students.

About Wounds Canada

Established in 1995, Wounds Canada is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of wound prevention and care in Canada. Wounds Canada is dedicated to a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to wound management and prevention to improve the health of Canadians. Our association focuses our efforts in four key areas:

1. Professional education
2. Public advocacy, awareness and education
3. Research
4. Partnerships to support Wounds Canada's goals of improving patient outcomes

Example of education programs available to health-care professionals with annual funding:

Timeline	Program	No. of participants	Cost
Months 1–12	Best Practice Approach to Skin Health and Wound Management: Knowledge program (A100MNN)	3000	\$491,550
Months 3–12	Best Practice Approach to Skin Health and Wound Management: Knowledge and Skills program (A100NWS)	300	\$96,615
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Pressure Injuries: Knowledge (A102MWN)	100	\$5,650
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Surgical Wound Complications: Knowledge (A103MWN)	100	\$5,650
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Skin Tears: Knowledge (A104MWN)	100	\$5,650
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers: Knowledge (A101MWN)	100	\$5,650
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills (A101MWS)	200	\$64,410
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge (A105MWN)	100	\$5,650
Months 4–12	Focus on the Prevention and Management of Venous Leg Ulcers: Knowledge and Skills (A105MWS)	200	\$64,410
Months 4–12	Holistic Approach to Diabetic Foot Offloading: Knowledge and Skills (A108MWS)	200	\$64,410
			Total \$809,645

The Bottom Line:

An educated general health-care force = earlier identification of risk for wounds or problems with existing wounds, leading to:

- Fewer wounds (focus on prevention)
- More efficient allocation of health-care resources (more for high-risk patients, fewer for low-risk)
- Reduced wound-related materials costs (dressings, antibiotics)
- Reduced clinician time (fewer dressing changes, specialist appointments, home care visits)
- Reduced rates of complications (fewer emergency department visits, hospital stays, severe disabilities, deaths, lawsuits)

The Result:

Health-care cost savings, reduced suffering and better patient health.

1. Ontario Wound Care Interest Group. "Fewer Wounds, Faster Healing: Framework for an Ontario Wound Care Strategy. October 2012.

2. Ibid.

3. Diabetes Canada and the Centre for Spatial Economics. "The Economic Impact of Offloading Devices for the Prevention of Amputations in Ontario." 2015.

4. Leaf Healthcare Inc, "The Financial Impact of Pressure Ulcers." 2016.