There is a difference...
Making the right Choice

WOC SPECIALTY NURSES

Nurse Week materials produced through the support of 3M
There is a difference...
Not all nurses caring for patients with wounds, ostomies, or incontinence are the same. Wound, ostomy and continence (WOC) nurses are specialists!

The Difference Is **Purpose**, **Preparation**, **and Practice**

WOC nursing is proud to be one of the few specialties recognized by the American Nurses Association (ANA). ANA’s recent recognition of the scope and standards of practice for WOC nursing as a specialty signifies that WOC nursing adheres to the high-standards cultivated by the ANA (WOCN, 2010). Wound, ostomy and continence (WOC) nursing is a distinct and well-defined field of nursing practice, which is international in scope and based on a tested body of specialty-related, evidence-based knowledge (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008).

**Read on to learn the differences...**
The Purpose

Who are WOC specialty nurses and what does a WOC Nurse do?

WOC specialty nursing has a proven track record of excellence for five decades, dedicated to the care of individuals with wound, ostomy or continence needs. WOC nurses provide acute and rehabilitative care for people with selected disorders of the gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and integumentary systems. As clinical experts, WOC nurses provide direct care to people with abdominal stomas, wounds, fistulas, drains, pressure ulcers, and continence disorders. The WOC nurse participates in the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of patients with wound, ostomy, and continence care needs. As an educator, consultant, researcher, and administrator, the WOC nurse plays a pivotal role in providing optimal patient care in multiple healthcare settings, including inpatient, outpatient, long-term care, and home health [WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008]
The premier organizations for the education and certification of wound, ostomy and continence specialty nurses are the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (WOCN) and the Wound Ostomy Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB), respectively. WOC specialty nurses have demonstrated competency by completing a WOCN-accredited, wound, ostomy and/or continence nursing education program (WOCNEP) and/or certification by the WOCNCB (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008).

EDUCATION
WOCNEPS are formal educational programs with a long, successful history dating back to the 1960s. WOCNEPS may provide tri-specialty education (wound, ostomy, continence) or any of the specialties individually. Programs adhere to a specific educational curriculum to insure the highest level of education to effectively prepare the WOC specialty nurse. WOCNEPs are unique in the extent of didactic instruction in specialty and professional practice content and precepted clinical experiences (Bonham, 2009). Only WOCN Society-accredited programs provide an organized, specialty education course for nurses in the areas of ostomy and continence care in addition to wound care.

Only registered nurses with at minimum a baccalaureate degree or above, and a minimum of one year’s clinical nursing experience are qualified to attend the WOCN Society, accredited educational programs. Successful graduates of the WOCNEPS have demonstrated competency to enter specialty nursing practice. Information about WOCN-accredited educational programs and links to all the programs can be obtained from the WOCN website (www.wocn.org).

CERTIFICATION
The WOCNCB sets high standards for certification eligibility. To be eligible for the WOCNCB examination(s), an applicant must be licensed as an RN and hold a baccalaureate degree. The applicant must also complete either a WOCN Society accredited nursing education program within 5 years of the exam, OR provide evidence of post baccalaureate experience to include 50 contact hours (CEU) (or equivalent in college work) during the last five years, within each specialty for which certification is sought; and 1,500 clinical experience hours during the last five years, within each specialty for which certification is sought (375 of the hours within one year of the exam) (WOCNCB, 2010).
Differences In Professional Practice

With a strong background in evidence-based care/best practice, a preventive focus on wound care, experience in overall wound care management, superior ostomy patient management skills, and skills in specialized continence care, the WOC specialty nurse is a must-have in any facility providing patient care. WOC specialty nurses produce better patient outcomes, reduce costs, and increase patient satisfaction.

DIFFERENCES IN WOUND CARE

Studies have shown that patients who were cared for by WOC specialty nurses had better outcomes in terms of healing rates and/or costs of care compared to patients cared for by other nurses (Arnold & Weir, 1994; Bolton et al., 2004; Harris & Shannon, 2008; Peirce, Tiffany, Kinsey & Link, 2008).

Wounds of all types are an increasing problem and the increased focus on pressure ulcers has attracted attention and increased interest in wound care and wound specialists. WOC nurses have the education, experience, and credentials necessary to provide top-notch wound care. WOC specialty nurses have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the etiology, pathology, wound healing process, principles of topical and adjunctive therapy, and wound treatment. WOC nurses are prepared by education and experience to develop and implement wound management programs, deliver expert clinical care, and provide oversight to maximize healing outcomes.

As the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) transitions to value-based purchasing, the value of WOC nursing is easily identified as facilities and agencies implement best practices to prevent pressure ulcers and catheter-associated urinary tract infections. The emphasis on preventive care is mandated across all care settings, particularly as families increasingly care for aging relatives with functional declines (WOCN, 2010). WOC nurses are experts in providing the comprehensive prevention measures and care planning necessary to reduce the frequency of these conditions.

Specialized skills/abilities of the WOC nurse for wound care include: comprehensive assessment, product selection, advanced treatment modalities, nutritional assessment/support, performing conservative sharp instrumental wound debridement, chemical cautery, managing complex wounds with fistulae, tubes or drains; recommending prevention strategies including support surfaces for pressure redistribution, and consulting and collaborating to coordinate complex treatment modalities and adjunctive therapies (WOCN, 2010).
DIFFERENCES IN OSTOMY CARE

WOC nurses provide superior ostomy care. Specialty education for nurses in ostomy care is only provided by WOCN-accredited programs and the only certification in ostomy care is from the WOCNCB. Patients undergoing ostomy surgery, whether temporary or permanent, require intensive physical and emotional care as well as continuing support to return to their normal lives. For patients across all settings with fecal and urinary diversions, fistulas, and tubes, WOC nurses provide this specialized care. The goal is maximizing independence in self-care as well as helping patients adapt to this life-altering change in body image. Specialty care is provided throughout the continuum of care and may include stoma site selection, pre- and post-operative management and education, complex prosthetic fitting, product selection, treatment of peristomal skin complications, sexual counseling, dietary counseling, and vocational counseling. The need for specialty care continues well beyond the immediate surgical period. WOC nurses provide long-term support to patients with permanent ostomies through support groups and follow-up care (WOCN, 2010).

As our population ages, the need for ostomy care and services will increase. To ensure patients remain independent as long as possible, adaptive equipment for those with sensory deficits or functional limitations require the specialized knowledge, teaching, and collaboration of the WOC nurse (WOCN, 2010).

DIFFERENCES IN CONTINENCE CARE

Caring for individuals with urinary and/or fecal incontinence is a billion-dollar industry. The prevalence of incontinence is exemplified by the increasing advertising dollars spent promoting the products that treat it. Urinary incontinence affects one out of 10 community-dwelling adults and one of three residents of long-term care facilities. Fecal incontinence affects more than 2 percent of community-dwelling adults and 12 percent or more of extended-care patients. We can only anticipate that the prevalence will continue to increase as our population ages (WOCN, 2010).

Fortunately, many patients can be cured or at least experience improvement in incontinence with treatment. WOC nurses specializing in this treatment area help manage patients with incontinence due to muscle or nerve dysfunction, congenital anomalies, infection, surgery, sphincter deficiencies, and psychological disorders. The specialized skills of the WOC nurse may include urodynamic testing, behavior training, bowel training, product selection, prosthetic fitting, pelvic muscle re-education, biofeedback, complex skin care, prevention strategies, and intermittent catheterization instruction (WOCN, 2010).
What Is The Difference For Your Facility?

With experience comes wisdom and expertise, and the great amount of education and preparation required to be a WOC specialty nurse enables the nurse to deliver and coordinate excellent skilled care. There are distinct advantages to employing a WOC specialty nurse who has met the rigorous requirements to complete a WOCNEP and obtain a WOCNCB certification.

The expert clinical skills of the WOC specialty nurse are just one aspect of their role that enhances and facilitates patient care. Though direct care may comprise the greater part of many WOC specialty nurse’s role; just as important, are other roles in the scope of practice for WOC nurses. In today’s health care climate of rising costs, the WOC nurse plays an important role in facilitating cost containment and enhancing revenue. The WOC nurse also enhances regulatory compliance, particularly in the areas of wound and continence management (WOCN, 2010).

WOC nurses improve patient care across all settings through advocacy, patient/family education, research, and the achievement of positive clinical outcomes (WOCN, 2010). These achievements are accomplished through a variety of activities including the following (WOCN, 2010):

- Formulary development for supply management
- Developing protocols for cost-effective resource utilization
- Proactive risk management
- Preventing complications and reducing recidivism
- Improving the continuity and coordination of care across settings
- Increasing staff productivity
- Facilitating reimbursement
- Developing new revenue-producing programs
- Enhancing patient satisfaction and loyalty
- Advocating for supply and service reimbursement
- Quality assurance
- Staff education and orientation
- Developing policy and procedures and standards for documentation
- Participating in research and/or utilization of evidence-based care
Making The Right Choice

As the administrator or decision-maker in your facility, it is important you understand the differences in a nurse’s basic education, specialty educational preparation (didactic, precepted clinical), nursing experience, and certification/recertification requirements for each area of WOC nursing practice. Your choice should be based on the needs of your facility. If you are looking for a nurse to be solely responsible for managing patients with wound, ostomy and continence needs, there is only one choice... the WOC nurse.

If you are in charge of hiring for your facility, be sure to review the facts. Do not make a decision based only on credentials or salary alone. Do not risk the quality of your patient care. Be sure to hire a WOC specialty nurse educated by a WOCN Society-accredited educational program and/or certified by the WOCNCB.
How do I find a WOC Specialty Nurse?

WOC nurses can be educated, certified, and practice in one or more areas of wound, ostomy, continence nursing. Both the WOCN Society and the WOCN Certification Board websites provide a search feature to locate a WOC nurse in your area. The WOCN Society website (www.wocn.org) has a public directory (patient referral link) devoted to helping patients find care. The directory allows the user to search a database of more than 4,700 Society members. However, membership in the WOCN Society does not guarantee certification. To verify certification credentials, please visit the WOCNCB website (www.wocncb.org).

What are the credentials?

Look for the following WOCNCB credentials awarded based on the successful completion of the rigorous certification process:

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<tr>
<th>Credential</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CWOCN®</td>
<td>Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWCN®</td>
<td>Certified Wound Care Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCN®</td>
<td>Certified Ostomy Care Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCCN®</td>
<td>Certified Ostomy Care Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWON™</td>
<td>Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWOCN-AP™</td>
<td>Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse Advance Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWON-AP™</td>
<td>Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse Advance Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWCN-AP™</td>
<td>Certified Wound Care Nurse Advance Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>COCN-AP™</td>
<td>Certified Ostomy Nurse Advance Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCN-AP™</td>
<td>Certified Continence Nurse Advance Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFCN®</td>
<td>Certified Foot Care Nurse</td>
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Numerous wound credentials are currently available with varying requirements. For more information about differences in wound care credentialing programs, please refer to the website for a comparison of wound care certification programs (http://www.wocncb.org/become-certified/how_to_choose.pdf).
About the WOCN Society

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses (WOCN) Society is a clinician-based professional organization with more than 4,700 members who treat individuals with wound, ostomy, and continence needs and are committed to cost-effective and outcome-based health care. The WOCN Society supports a comprehensive health care system focused on wellness that maximizes patient health and minimizes long-range costs. WOCN is dedicated to assuring the availability of appropriate care for individuals with wounds, ostomies, and continence needs because patients deserve health care that helps them maximize their functional status. The WOCN Society encourages the appropriate use of specialty nurses to assure that its goal of giving the most beneficial care in the most cost-effective manner is met (www.wocn.org). (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008)

About the WOCN Certification Board

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB) is a professional organization dedicated to promoting the highest standard of consumer care and safety by providing credentialing in the areas of wound, ostomy and continence nursing. The WOCNCB has its own governing board and is a distinct and separate organization from the WOCN Society. WOCNCB credentialing provides formal recognition of this commitment to high standards in wound, ostomy, and continence nursing. Certification provides formal recognition of knowledge as a wound, ostomy, and/or continence care nurse beyond that gained from traditional nursing education programs. The WOCNCB stands firmly in its belief that WOC certification improves the level and quality of patient care by defining and maintaining competency within the WOC specialties. Furthermore, certification provides a competitive advantage for employment and promotes job satisfaction. The nurse who chooses to certify demonstrates a commitment to WOC nursing practice and patient protection (www.wocncb.org). (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008)
REFERENCES


Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™

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