Achieving Dramatic Results with Continence Care

When a nurse specializing in the care of continence disorders is involved in early identification, the focus is on reducing the incidence and delaying the onset of urinary and/or fecal incontinence, which will reduce the need for extensive use of supplies, services, and institutionalization. WOC nurses specialize in managing and improving incontinence.

WOC nurses reduce costs associated with urinary incontinence disorders by:
- Developing and implementing management plans based on low-cost, evidence-based treatment modalities and on restoration of continence.
- Eliminating long-term product use and premature or inappropriate institutionalization.
- Educating staff, patients, and families about effective management techniques.

“Most WOC nurses will agree that when they see an ostomy patient learn to change a pouch for the first time, see a wound patient have less pain, or help a continence patient be able to leave the house for the first time in months, all the long hours are worth it.

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Why a WOC Nurse?

In the United States, millions of individuals suffer with wound, ostomy, and continence disorders. This includes more than 5 million Americans who are debilitated by non-healing wounds, a half million individuals who have ostomies, and a staggering 11 million men and women who endure urinary and fecal incontinence. As surprising as these numbers are, experts predict that they will continue to rise as the number of elderly and chronically ill individuals in our society increases. The cost of treating patients with these disorders also threatens to spiral out of control.

Optimal management of patients with chronic wounds, ostomies, or continence disorders by professionals who are expertly trained to address these conditions can result in improved patient outcomes and cost savings for health care institutions. Wound care specialists have been credited with significantly reducing amputation rates and shortening the average hospital stay by 24 percent. A 2002 study published by the Canadian Medical Association reveals an estimated 60-70 percent of patients who are affected by urinary incontinence and are treated by a properly trained professional could be cured or taught to handle their conditions more effectively.

WOC nurses, whether supporting a patient’s return to a productive lifestyle or providing palliative care, are uniquely qualified to offer interventions and cost effective treatments to individuals with wound, ostomy, or continence disorders.

WOC Nurses

The role of a nurse specializing in the care of patients with wound, ostomy, or continence disorders is multifaceted, challenging, and rewarding. WOC nurses coordinate care in complex environments and employ a full range of skills to promote healing and independence.

WOC nurses also coordinate and collaborate with other health care specialists and make recommendations for patient care that are evidence-based, cost effective and individualized, with a dual focus on complication prevention and disease state management.

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WOC Nurses: Wound Care, a Healing Presence

Because complex case management is required for patients with complicated wounds and medical co-morbidities, the WOC nurse plays a valuable role in the health care setting. Not only have studies demonstrated accelerated wound healing with the presence of a WOC nurse, these studies have also identified cost savings stemming from the intervention of a wound care nursing specialist.

WOC nurses are trained to treat pressure ulcers and other chronic or non-healing wounds that result from lower extremity arterial disease, venous disease, neuropathic disease, fistulae, and surgical wounds.

WOC nurses offer a range of services, including:

- Coordinating care across the continuum of care setting.
- Providing education to patients, family, and nursing staff about preventive measures or techniques to optimize wound healing.
- Implementing plans to prevent pressure ulcers and other wound developments.
- Leading performance improvement projects that successfully reduce the percentage of patients who develop pressure ulcers and wound complications.

“I became a certified wound care nurse through WOCN. My patients benefit from what I have learned from the continuing education provided by the WOCN network.”

Debbie Harris, BSN, JD, RN, CWCN

WOC Nurses: Assisting the Ostomy Patient and Family

According to the United Ostomy Association of America, nearly 750,000 individuals have an ostomy and 75,000 new fecal and urinary ostomies are created annually. A 2005 article published in Patient Safety & Quality Healthcare indicated that when a WOC nurse is involved with the care of the ostomy patient; the patient, family, and overall medical team benefit.

WOC nurses take the lead in:

- Developing individualized rehabilitative care that is essential to facilitating the patient’s return to a productive lifestyle.
- Selecting optimal stoma sites preoperatively to promote post-operative independence.
- Providing patient and family education and follow-up care.
- Identifying and addressing issues that require further attention.

“WOC Nurses impact outcomes by their knowledge and advocacy work. They focus on the whole person, not just the wound or ostomy.”

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Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society

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Founded in 1968, the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses (WOCN) Society is the only national organization for nurses who specialize in the prevention and treatment of pressure ulcers and the management and rehabilitation of persons with wounds, ostomies, and continence disorders. With more than 4,200 members, the Society's mission is to support its members by promoting educational, clinical, and research opportunities to advance the practice and guide the delivery of expert health care to individuals with wound, ostomy, and continence disorders.

Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses
A Smart Addition to the Healthcare Team

• Delivering Quality Care
• Improving Patient Outcomes
• Reducing Health Care Costs

Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™

Providing Expertise and Comfort Throughout the Life Cycle

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