Position Statement about the Role and Scope of Practice for Wound Care Providers

Originated By:
Wound Treatment Associate Task Force

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Statement of Position:

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) is a clinician-based, professional organization of members, who treat individuals with wounds, ostomies and incontinence, and are committed to cost-effective and outcome-based health care (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008). WOCN is dedicated to assuring the availability of appropriate care for individuals with wounds, ostomies, and incontinence, because patients deserve health care that assists them in maximizing their functional status. WOCN recognizes that to fulfill its mission of ensuring access to quality care to growing numbers of patients with wound care needs, there is a need to extend education to other providers. The WOCN recognizes three levels of wound care providers: WOC advanced practice registered nurse, WOC specialty nurse and wound treatment associate, whose scopes of practice will be defined. WOCN endorses the appropriate utilization of each of level of wound care provider.

Purpose (Rationale for Position):

To clarify roles of wound care providers: WOC advanced practice registered nurses, WOC specialty nurses, and wound treatment associates.

History/Background:

WOCN Society Mission Statement (WOCN, 2006)

WOCN is a professional nursing society, which supports its members by promoting educational, clinical, and research opportunities to advance the practice and guide the delivery of expert health care to individuals with wounds, ostomies and incontinence.
Philosophy (WOCN, 2006)

WOCN believes that nursing as a profession enhances health care services to a multifaceted society and includes prevention, health maintenance, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation. **Wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nursing is an area of specialty practice within the framework of nursing that strives to advance the health care and quality of life of all affected individuals.**

WOCN believes that continuing education and research provide the basis for current, comprehensive nursing practice for patients with wounds, ostomies and incontinence. Learning may occur on a basic, advanced or continuing educational level and combines the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and clinical expertise. **WOCN provides quality continuing education for its members and for other health care professionals to enhance and improve WOC nursing practice.**

By a process of accreditation, WOCN promotes high standards of education and requires a minimum baccalaureate degree as the entry level for Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing Education Programs (WOCNEP). WOCNEPS may provide a tri-specialty education program for wound, ostomy, and continence care and/or any of the specialty practice areas individually.

Scope of Practice (WOCN, 2010)

Wound, ostomy, and continence (WOC) nursing is a multifaceted, evidence-based specialty practice incorporating a unique body of knowledge to provide excellence in prevention, health maintenance, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitative nursing care to persons with select disorders of the gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and integumentary systems. This complex, interdependent specialty encompasses the care of all patient populations across the continuum of care and all settings of care. While serving in pivotal roles as direct care providers, managers/administrators, educators, researchers, and consultants, WOC nurses direct their efforts at guiding optimal patient care that improves the quality of life for individuals with wound, ostomy, and continence concerns and achieves positive clinical outcomes. WOC nurses can specialize in all three areas of WOC nursing or focus on one or more areas of specialization.

WOCN Goals (WOCN, 2006)

The goals of WOCN are to:

1. Provide standards of practice for the WOC nurse to insure quality patient care services.

2. Provide continuing nursing education for the professional development of the WOC specialty nurse.

3. Represent and promote WOC specialty nursing practice to the public, to allied health care professionals, the community and governmental groups.
4. Accredit Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing Education Programs (WOCNEP).

5. **Provide quality continuing education in the field of WOC specialty nursing to other health care providers.**

6. Promote ongoing development of the profession and the association through research and long-range planning activities.

**WOCN Society Strategic Plan (2009)**

**Education Vision:** WOCN will be the premier provider of WOC nursing education.

**Education Goal:** WOCN will be the premier provider of education for all levels of nurses providing WOC services.

**Objective:** Increase educational outreach/offers for non-baccalaureate nurses providing WOC nursing care (associate degree nurse [ADN]; diploma, licensed practical nurse/licensed vocational nurse [LPN/LVN]).

A. **Strategy**
   Develop a WOCN endorsed, educational program that provides a WOCN approved credential (e.g., certificate of completion) for non-baccalaureate degree nurses providing wound and ostomy care (wound treatment associate [WTA]; ostomy treatment nurse [OTN]).

B. **Tactics**
   Clarify the roles and scope of practice for wound care providers (advanced practice, specialty practice, and non-specialist).

Pursuant to the 2009 Strategic Plan, as the first step in providing basic education to non-WOC nurse providers, WOCN has developed a curriculum that was predicated on the vision, goals, and objectives derived from the plan.

**Current Issues and Trends (WOCN, 2010)**

Major trends in the American health care system present opportunities and challenges for WOC nursing. WOC specialty practice is influenced by shifts in population demographics, legislative initiatives, and rising health care costs as well as patient safety and quality concerns. As the population ages, it is expected that ever increasing numbers of individuals will suffer from acute and chronic wounds requiring specialized skills to manage. In addition, there are increasing numbers of service personnel requiring expert wound care and a deficit in high level educational programs available to the Armed Services.
Conclusion:

A description of the role and scope of practice for WOC advanced practice registered nurses, WOC specialty nurses and non-WOC care providers (i.e., wound treatment associate) has been developed as a basis for developing educational programs and to clarify the differences in the preparation, role functions and duties among the different providers.

Recommendations (Practice, Education, Research, Other):

Note: Practice limits are defined by each state and each nurse is accountable to practice in accordance with the specific requirements of the licensing boards in the state(s) in which he or she practices.

ROLE/SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR THE ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSE, WOC SPECIALTY NURSE, AND WOUND TREATMENT ASSOCIATE

1. WOC advanced practice registered nurse (APRNs) (APRN Consensus Work Group & NCSBN APRN Advisory Committee, 2008).
   a. Education: Master’s degree or higher.
   b. Licensure: Licensed as APRN by State Board of Nursing (SBON).
   c. Certification:
      i. Certification as an APRN by a nationally recognized certification board such as ANCC or AANP.
      ii. Specialty certification in wound care awarded by a nationally accredited certifying body (e.g., CWCN, CWON, or CWOCN).
   d. Level of autonomy:
      Functions independently or in collaboration with a physician (dependent on SBON).
   e. Unique functions/abilities in wound care management (WOCN, 2010):
      i. Establishes a medical diagnosis based on comprehensive assessment.
      ii. Makes advanced clinical decisions.
      iii. Uses prescriptive authority, procedures, referrals, treatments, and therapies in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.
      iv. Provides leadership in coordination of multidisciplinary health care for integrated delivery of patient care.
v. Facilitates/coordinates use of systems/community resources to implement and enhance care across continuums.

vi. Analyzes outcomes (related to organizational care delivery and populations served) to make recommendations for improvements in care delivery systems across the care settings.

vii. Contributes to nursing knowledge by conducting, critically appraising or synthesizing research that discovers, examines and evaluates knowledge, theories, criteria and creative approaches to improve health care practices.

viii. Provides leadership in developing care models to manage chronic WOC care issues.

ix. Develops and implements educational programs for patients, staff and other health care providers.

2. WOC specialty nurse.

a. Education: Minimum Baccalaureate degree.

b. Licensure: Licensed as a registered nurse (RN) by State Board of Nursing (SBON).

c. Specialty education/certification: Completion of a WOCN Accredited Educational Program in wound management and/or certification in wound care by WOCNCB (i.e., CWCN, CWON, or CWOCN).

d. Level of autonomy:

   Functions under the guidance of an MD or APRN.

e. Unique functions/abilities in wound care management (WOCN, 2010):

   i. Develops/coordinates agency wide programs for prevention and management of skin breakdown.

   ii. Provides expert consultation and/or hands-on care for individual patients with acute or chronic wounds.

   iii. Establishes/coordinates multi-disciplinary, comprehensive management plans.

   iv. Performs conservative sharp instrumental wound debridement of devitalized tissue and chemical cauterization per physician order.
v. Coordinates care for populations of patients, identifying trends, and developing standardized prevention and treatment protocols and refining protocols based on outcomes.

vi. Develops and implements educational programs for patients, staff and other health care providers.

vii. Coordinates quality improvement initiatives to optimize skin and wound outcomes.

viii. Advocates for the patient with skin and wound care needs and for the professional practice.

3. **Wound treatment associate (WTA).**

   a. **Education:** Minimum of Diploma, Associate Degree, Practical/Vocational Nurse education, or successful completion of military medic training.

   b. **Licensure:** RN, LPN/LVN (no licensure required for military medic training).

   c. Certificate of completion from a WOCN endorsed, WTA continuing education program.

   d. **Level of autonomy:**

      Functions under the direction of the supervising APRN, WOC specialty nurse or physician.

   e. **Unique functions/abilities in wound care management:**

      i. Implements preventive care per established protocols and monitors skin status.

      ii. Implements treatment plans established by the supervising APRN, WOC specialty nurse or physician, and uses products as outlined in the plan.

      iii. Provides on-going monitoring of the wound and the patient's response to the established plan to include measurement and observation of the wound.

      iv. Notifies supervising clinician when the wound deteriorates or fails to progress.

      v. Participates in quality improvement programs.
References:


**Date Approved by the WOCN Board of Directors:** June 3, 2011