

MEDIA RELEASE

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IMPROVING HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS' SKILLS IN CHRONIC WOUND MANAGEMENT

The coronavirus pandemic has ensured the spotlight on health care professionals has never been brighter and the public's appreciation for their work is at an all-time high.

However, despite the raised awareness of the importance of clinicians, their work on a crisis affecting around 420,000 Australians each year goes largely unnoticed.

The hidden epidemic of chronic wounds impacts the health, wellbeing, and finances of many Australians. Treatment and care for chronic wound this year will consume over \$3 billion from the health and aged care budgets. For individuals, the average out of pocket cost can be around \$4,000 a year.

Specialised health care workers need and deserve greater resources, support, and recognition to tackle this problem.

That is why Wounds Australia, the nation's peak body for wound prevention and management, is holding *Wound Awareness Week 2020* from 17 to 23 August.

For seven days, Wounds Australia will open its resources and expertise to all clinicians to help improve their chronic wound knowledge and care. Wounds Australia will also be proposing changes to government policies and programs to reduce the burden of chronic wounds on the nation's health and health care workforce.

Wounds Australia modelling shows alternative approaches can reduce the impact of wounds on thousands of people and save around hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Achieving these numbers will require the expansion of wound care expertise across health care professions, as well as greater awareness by the public about risk factors such as age.

As the Australian population continues to age, the prevalence and burden of chronic wounds will only worsen, otherwise.

Wounds Australia CEO Blake Wilson said the dedication and work of health care professionals have never been more important, which is why the organisation will be making this year's *Wound Awareness Week* goals bigger than ever before.

"Whether it's the nation's health and wellbeing or the size of the health budget at stake, proper management of wounds is vital to meet the challenges of our ageing population, Blake Wilson said.

“It’s crucial for health care workers to stay informed of the latest treatments and advice. It’s also important to continuously develop their skills to ensure Australians are receiving the best possible care.

“Wounds Australia supports health care experts by delivering the professional development and resources needed to improve the care of chronic wound patients.

“We hope this year’s *Wound Awareness Week* will see clinicians across the country tap into our expertise and join us in our effort to tackle the health and financial burden chronic wounds places on Australians.”

The COVID-19 pandemic is shifting this year’s *Wound Awareness Week* towards online experiences, focusing on events to allow health care professionals to improve their expertise, care and treatment including:

- webinars from leading wound care specialists
- expanded online resources on best practice wound management
- social media-based conversations and knowledge sharing.

Wounds Australia welcomes health professionals, scientists, students, and anyone with an interest in wound care to join our community. For less than the cost of buying one newspaper a week, Wounds Australia members can access a range of benefits that will grow their expertise including:

- scholarships and grants
- cutting edge information and resources on wound management and care
- the quarterly *Wounds Practice & Research Journal* and fortnightly email news
- access to our specialist e-magazine *WoundConnect*

For more information on joining Wounds Australia, visit www.woundsaustralia.com.au.

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Contact: Kel Watt (Watt Advocacy & Communications) 0411 707 489

Spokespersons for the *Wound Awareness Week 2020* campaign include Dr Nicoletta Frescos (Chair, Wounds Australia Board) and Blake Wilson (Wounds Australia CEO).

Dr Nicoletta Frescos – Chair, Wounds Australia Board

Chair of Wounds Australia Dr Nicoletta Frescos is one of Australia's most respected chronic wound management experts. She has over 15 years in clinical practice, research and clinical teaching. Dr Frescos is:

- a lecturer and clinical educator at La Trobe University, Victoria
- Clinical Research coordinator and podiatry wound consultant at the Austin Health Wound Clinic
- Health Adviser for the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Dr Frescos has expertise in chronic wound pain, diabetes foot related ulcers and the psychosocial impact of lower limb wounds.

She is a strong advocate of an interdisciplinary team approach to wound care and a passionate teacher on lower extremity wound prevention and management.

Blake Wilson – Chief Executive Officer

Blake's reputation as a reformist CEO has been enhanced by his first year's work with Wounds Australia.

While initially appointed for his business expertise, Blake has built partnerships to make Wounds Australia a force in shaping a more efficient and effective health care system.

Blake has expanded the reach of *Wound Awareness Week* this year. In addition to the usual strong public awareness campaign, the *Week* now connects with wound care's commercial sector and other advocacy organisations.

Blake understands the key to reducing the incidence and impact of chronic wounds is a more knowledgeable, skilled and coordinated health care workforce. That's why he is expanding the resources and professional development opportunities available during *Wound Awareness Week 2020*.

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