

MEDIA RELEASE

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TREATING PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC WOUNDS

The nation's peak body for wound prevention and management, Wounds Australia, is hoping to leverage the public's high trust ranking of healthcare specialists to educate people on the risks and treatment of chronic wounds.

The organisation's key annual event, *Wound Awareness Week 2020*, will also be used to shine a spotlight on the hidden affliction of chronic wounds and take action to get its members the support and recognition they deserve for their work in managing a patient's physical, emotional and financial pressures.

From 17 to 23 August, *Wound Awareness Week* will see Wounds Australia provide its expanded suite of resources and services for all clinicians, as well as their members. The goal of the *Week* is to build the expertise and pathways for healthcare professionals to deliver excellent care, and the satisfaction of knowing they've made a difference in someone's life.

Stress and anxiety about chronic wounds

Whether in hospital or at home, patients are likely to feel distressed about their chronic wound. They often suffer embarrassment because of the odour or drainage from the wound. Contact with family and friends often decreases, leaving many feeling alone and isolated.

Health care professionals should not underestimate how important a partner they can be in their patient's care and recovery. By acknowledging their patients' discomfort and stigma, they can help to explore options for emotional and psychological support.

Pain and chronic wounds

Chronic wounds can be extremely painful, leading to slower healing. In addition to constant background pain, treatment often hurts and many patients report anticipatory pain before treatment even commences.

While healthcare professionals understand managing and reducing pain is important to healing, conversations and assessment of pain and analgesia should continue until treatment ends.

Financial impact of chronic wounds

The cost of dressings and treatment is unaffordable for some people, especially those on fixed incomes and pensions. In addition to the emotional stress, not receiving the most appropriate wound treatment means healing can be delayed.

Rather than avoiding a conversation about finances, health professionals can discuss treatment options and help patients to understand the impact of treatment on healing time. If they understand some treatments can deliver faster healing and prevent longer term costs, patients may feel more in control of their health decisions.

A team approach to chronic wound care

Some wounds require specialist care from more than one type of health professional. For example, a diabetic ulcer might require input from a specialist doctor or GP, as well as a wound care nurse, a podiatrist or diabetes educator. Health care professionals should explain the reason for involvement of each team member to their patient.

Delivering clear and trustworthy advice will improve relationships with patients and their health outcomes.

For more information on Wounds Australia, its resources and *Wound Awareness Week 2020*, visit www.woundsaustralia.com.au

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