



POSITION STATEMENT

Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Canada (NSWOCC) (formerly Canadian Association for Enterostomal Therapy) **Position Statement on** **Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy and Continence (NSWOC)**

A NURSE SPECIALIZED IN WOUND, OSTOMY, AND CONTINENCE (NSWOC) is a registered nurse who has graduated from a wound, ostomy, and continence education program that is recognized by the World Council of Enterostomal Therapists.¹ These post-registered nurse programs utilize evidence-informed curricula and incorporate a foundation of both theoretical and clinical education in the tri-specialty of wound, ostomy, and continence care.

Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Canada (NSWOCC) believes that a NSWOC is a proven nurse leader and expert in the areas of wound, ostomy and continence related nursing care. The involvement of a NSWOC in direct clinical care, policy making, healthcare education, and research has clearly shown to have positive benefits for the Canadian healthcare system and the individuals it serves.

Healthcare professionals are frequently challenged with overlapping wound, ostomy and continence related issues in the care of their patients.* The tri-specialty educational preparation of the NSWOC provides unique skills needed to effectively manage wound, ostomy and continence issues either separately or collectively. Care from a NSWOC results in high-quality patient-centred care. The Canadian healthcare system has a responsibility to ensure that all Canadians are receiving high-quality, evidence-informed, patient-centred care. For this to be realized, NSWOCC maintains that any Canadian challenged with wound, ostomy, or continence issues deserves care from a NSWOC.

The Canadian Nursing Association (CNA) offers the designation of certification to specialty nursing groups with demonstrated core competencies through a rigorous examination process. CNA certification is recognized nationally for practice excellence and commitment to lifelong learning. Further, certification is valued by employers because certification represents specialized knowledge and is viewed as enhanced professional credibility.² In 2009, Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy, and Continence (then Enterostomal Therapy Nurses) were included in a select group of nursing specialties recognized by the CNA as the nursing specialty for wound, ostomy and continence care.

The NSWOC functions as a clinician, leader, consultant, educator, researcher, policy maker, and administrator within many health care settings including inpatient, rehabilitation, outpatient, continuing care, long-term care, and home care. NSWOCs also practice outside the health care system in areas such as home health, retail and the medical device industry.

NSWOCC believes that the NSWOC provides proven clinical, leadership, research, and fiscal benefits to both individual patients and the healthcare system as a whole:

1. Clinically, the NSWOC can provide direct health care to Canadians who experience issues with:
 - a. Wounds, including but not limited to, surgical, palliative, burns, fistulae, drains, pressure-related injuries, moisture-associated dermatitis, skin tears, lower extremity venous, arterial and diabetic and lower-limb edema management;

*The word patient appears throughout this document and refers to patients, residents, clients and their families



- b. Acute and ongoing care and management of abdominal stomas resulting from cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, trauma, congenital abnormalities, and other causes; and
 - c. Urinary/fecal incontinence, constipation, and incomplete bladder/bowel emptying.
2. The NSWOC provides leadership in the clinical setting for wound care, ostomy care and/or continence care by promoting best practice in a cost-efficient manner. The NSWOC demonstrates leadership and supports quality health care through the facilitation of evidence-based and innovative best practice, teaching, consulting, mentoring, program development, and quality monitoring.

In addition, the NSWOC is active with other professional organizations to develop and enhance the delivery of health care for Canadians (e.g. Wounds Canada, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario). NSWOCs facilitate knowledge transfer to patients and to generalist nurses and other health care professionals in all settings across the health care continuum. Evidence has demonstrated that when NSWOC support home care nurses they increase home care nurses' knowledge, confidence, and interest in furthering their education in wound care.¹

3. The NSWOC enables the benefits of research by initiating and participating in scientific inquiry that expands nursing knowledge and practice for the tri-specialty. Through the interpretation and application of NSWOC research and related research the NSWOC improves patient care. The NSWOC communicates and disseminates research through publications, oral and poster presentations, and the development of health care guidelines and policies.
4. From a fiscal perspective the NSWOC facilitates the appropriate and efficient use of resources and healthcare products. The NSWOC improves wound healing times, wound closure rates, and the associated costs³ and ensures fewer emergency room visits and fewer re-admissions to hospital by home care patients with wounds.¹ NSWOC are an important asset in achieving better outcomes for hospital-acquired pressure injuries in acute care settings.⁴

Association & Specialty Background

The Canadian Association for Enterostomal Therapy (CAET) was established in 1981. In 1996 CAET launched a bilingual Enterostomal Therapy Nursing Education Program (ETNEP) and in 2007 the ETNEP became a distance education program offered online with a clinical preceptorship. In 2009 the specialty of Enterostomal Therapy Nursing (ETN) was recognized for certification by the CNA. On May 4, 2018, the CAET changed its name to Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Canada (NSWOCC) to represent the association of nurses practicing this tri-specialty. The designation of ETN was changed to Nurse Specialized in Wound, Ostomy, Continence (NSWOC). Nurses certified by the CNA had their designation changed to Wound, Ostomy, Continence Canada Certified or WOCC(C).

The Nurses Specialized in Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Canada is a not-for-profit association and registered charity with a membership that represents over 350 nurses specializing in wound, ostomy and continence. The NSWOCC acts in the public interest by representing Canadian NSWOCs and providing national leadership in the promotion of high standards for NSWOC practice, education, research, and administration in order to achieve the highest quality specialized nursing care.

The specialty of NSWOC (formerly ET Nursing) originated in the United States in the late 1950s when the first Enterostomal Therapy educational program was directed towards the care of patients who had undergone ostomy surgery. A formal ostomy rehabilitation program was developed and the title of Enterostomal Therapist was allocated to its graduates. During the 1960s ETNs developed expertise in

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wounds when they were consulting for veterans, returning from Vietnam, with both ostomies and wounds. In 1986 the scope of the ETN practice expanded to include continence care.⁵

References:

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2. Canadian Nurses Association. CNA Certification Program. [Cited: 2018] Available from: <https://cna-aiic.ca/en/certification>
3. Harris C, Shannon R. An innovative enterostomal therapy nurse model of community wound care delivery: a retrospective cost effective analysis. *J Wound Ostomy Continence Nurs.* 2008;35:169-183.
4. Boyle D, Bergquist-Beringer S, Cramer E. Relationship of wound, ostomy, and continence certified nurses and healthcare-acquired conditions in acute care hospitals. *J Wound Ostomy Continence Nurs.* 2017;44(3):1-10.
5. World Council of Enterostomal Therapists. WCET History. [Cited: 2018.] Available from: www.wcetn.org/history

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