

The Question of Certifying Wound-care Specialists

By Heather Orsted
and Kathryn Kozell

We are often asked by our wound-care colleagues what courses they can take or what exams they can write to become "certified" wound-care specialists. We hear time and again that many clinicians want to be identified as having met recognized academic and clinical requirements in wound-care practice. And while universities and community colleges in Canada do provide recognized diploma courses in wound care, to date there is no approved certification program related to wound care.

Through our discussions, we've discovered that there is quite a bit of confusion about this issue. Complicating matters is the presence of individuals and organizations claiming to offer certification, when, in fact, any certification they give has no general application in Canadian health-care settings. For example, wound-care certification programs imported from other countries do not provide the same standard of education that is available in Canada and are not approved or recognized by the Canadian Nurses Association.

To clarify the situation and to provide guidance, we've worked together with our colleagues to research this issue and come up with some information we hope will be enlightening. First, a couple of definitions.

Accreditation refers to a process whereby a professional or educational organization reviews an educational program and determines that the program meets its educational standards. The organization, through accreditation, recommends these programs to its members as suitable for their continued education.

Certification is a process in which a professional or educational organization administers a testing process to determine if applicants meet a standard of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Through certification, an organization informs the public that an individual meets its competency standards in the designated field of practice.

The good news is that the Canadian Association of Wound Care (CAWC), in collaboration with the Canadian Association of Enterostomal Therapy (CAET), is developing a strategic plan in conjunction with other Canadian professional bodies toward the formation of recognized wound-care certification in Canada.

As this work continues, we think it's important to present the official position statement that these two bodies have drafted regarding this issue:

"The Canadian Association of Wound Care and the Canadian Association for Enterostomal

Therapy support the development of a Canadian wound-care certification program through the appropriate professional channels. The CAWC and CAET believe that Canadian wound-care certification is best supported through the development of wound-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes in Canadian educational, competency-based programs. The CAWC and CAET urge wound-care clinicians to carefully examine wound-care educational programs that purport to offer wound-care certification to determine if they meet rigorous Canadian educational standards." ☺

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