

**RESTRUCTURING WOUND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES:
THE NIAGARA COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRE**

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Wound care, although often unrecognized and unnoticed by many in the health care field, is a critically important issue that in most cases presents many fundamental opportunities for improvement. Increasingly, work is underway to better understand the negative impact of chronic wounds on patient health and well being, and the substantial burden wound care places on health care staff and organizations.

Early efforts to improve wound care have focused primarily on the introduction of advanced products and technologies in the clinical setting. Although these efforts have been met with some successes, they have also raised important questions about whether technological innovations have been adequately supported by clinical education, and whether clinical outcomes can be sustained over time.

The Niagara Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) in Southern Ontario has been involved in the implementation of a comprehensive approach to advanced wound management. Data collection and analysis over a period of more than two years has revealed findings related to implementation issues, clinical outcomes, patient health and quality of life, resource utilization, access to health care services in the community, program sustainability, and areas for further investigation. Data were collected at four points: in the fall of 2004, just prior to the introduction of the Advanced Practice Nurse, and then for three consecutive years in March 2005, 2006, and 2007. Findings revealed a decrease in clients requiring daily (or more frequent) dressing changes from 49% in 2004, to 14% in 2006, to 14% again in 2007. Ninety percent of venous leg ulcers are now compressed, and the average age of wounds within the population has decreased from 59 weeks in 2005, to 29 weeks in 2006, to 22 weeks in 2007.

Wound management services that are clinically effective and efficiently delivered are seen as an important prerequisite for enabling the Niagara CCAC to offer greater access to health care services in the community, and to meet the growing demands for an increasingly broad range of health care services.