



## THE ISSUE OF LOWER EXTREMITY WOUNDS- LIMB PRESERVATION TOOLS

Diabetes, a serious chronic disease, is growing at an exponential rate in Canada, and is projected to strike over 7 million Canadians or 17% of the population by 2032, while the global incidence is estimated at 6.3%. One of the most serious complications of diabetes is foot ulcers that may not be diagnosed and appropriately treated, leading to amputations. It is estimated that between 60–70% of diabetic patients will develop a sensory neuropathy that can lead to a foot ulcer.

In 2015, the cost of treating a diabetic foot ulcer in Canada was approximately \$547 million. Amputations are also very costly and can lead to increased mortality rates. Clearly, these alarming statistics demonstrate the need for improved foot care for all diabetic patients focused on prevention and better management.

Dr. Gary Sibbald and the WoundPedia team have developed protocols and several educational initiatives focused on prevention and better management across all patient groups. The WoundPedia Tool Kit in particular has been very well received by clinicians and has led to improved patient outcomes. The Tool Kit is a comprehensive set of implements designed to assess diabetic foot health, identify potential problems and assist the professional in developing a management plan.

Helen Arputhanathan is a Registered Nurse whose experience in wound care started in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where she managed all types of wounds in a 1,500-bed hospital.

Recognizing the value of education, Helen enhanced her expertise by completing the International Interprofessional Wound Care Course (IIWCC) and then went on to a master's degree and the Nurses Specializing in Wound, Ostomy and Continence (NSWOC) program.

During the COVID lockdowns, Helen was challenged to provide care to home bound patients, particularly individuals with unresolved wounds, palliative patients and those without a precise diagnosis. Helen collaborated with Dr. Sibbald and used information technology to reach her patients. This led to a very efficient navigation system of assessment, reporting and follow-up.

The tool kit evolved from this navigation system and was developed to facilitate patient management in a user-friendly all-encompassing kit. The components of the tool kit speed up bedside testing and empower patients to get involved in their own management strategies. Helen has experienced remarkable success utilizing the toolkit and envisions its potential across diverse community settings. She advocates for its adoption as a pivotal tool, empowering clinicians and nurses to achieve superior management outcomes and enhance patient care overall.

Donations to the WoundPedia Education Foundation will directly support the distribution of this toolkit to a wider network of clinicians and nurses, particularly in underserved rural and remote areas where the demand for such resources is critical. Together, we can ensure that more healthcare professionals have access to these essential tools, thereby improving patient outcomes across varied healthcare environments.

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