

# WOC NURSE WEEK

Wound  
Ostomy and  
Continence  
Nurses  
Society®

◆ APRIL 8-14, 2012 ◆



**WOC nurses stand out  
like a precious gem.**

***Recognize the Difference.***

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## Recognize the *Difference*

Nurses who care for patients with wounds, ostomies and incontinence are not all the same. Wound, ostomy and continence (WOC) nurses are specialists.

WOC nursing is proud to be one of the few specialties recognized by the American Nurses Association (ANA). ANA's recent recognition of the scope and standards of practice for WOC nursing as a specialty signifies that WOC nursing adheres to the high-standards cultivated by the ANA (WOCN® Society, 2010). WOC nursing is a distinct and well-defined field of nursing practice, which is international in scope and based on a tested body of specialty-related, evidence-based knowledge (WOCN® Society-WOCNCB®, 2008).

Like a precious gem, the WOC nurse brings unparalleled *quality* and *value* to a patient and multidisciplinary team.



## *Recognize the Difference a WOC Nurse Makes in Patient Care...*



WOC nursing has a proven track record of excellence for five decades, dedicated to the care of individuals with wound, ostomy or continence needs. WOC nurses provide acute and rehabilitative care for people with selected disorders of the gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and integumentary systems. As clinical experts, WOC nurses provide direct care to people with abdominal stomas, wounds, fistulas, drains, pressure ulcers, other complicated wounds, and continence disorders. The WOC nurse participates in the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of a plan of care for patients with wound, ostomy, and continence care needs.

As an educator, consultant, researcher, and administrator, the WOC nurse plays a pivotal role in providing optimal patient care in multiple health care settings, including inpatient, outpatient, long-term care, and home health (WOCN® Society-WOCNCB®, 2008).



When I had a colostomy earlier this year, I was emotionally devastated and physically inept at changing the pouch. I don't know what I ever would have done without the expert care and compassion of the very competent WOC nurse, Eileen! She was so patient teaching me just how to drain and to change the appliance and she was also so very kind and encouraging every time we talked either on the phone or when she visited me, both at the rehab facility and at my home. She over-extended herself to me and insisted that I call her at any time if I had any questions or problems. That was so comforting to me! I am 75 years old and was very depressed about what had happened to me – Eileen knew just what to say to cheer me up and to help me feel better about myself, which helped me immensely to cope with my new way of life. Thanks to Eileen, I now think nothing of draining and changing the appliance and can do it quickly and efficiently. I'm back to my old self and I now go about my daily life without giving a thought to the colostomy (other than tending to it when it needs tending to).

I was so very fortunate to have Eileen as my WOC nurse and now as the dear friend that she has become to me. With her more-than-competent nursing skills and her cheerful and bubbly personality, she is indeed an asset to her profession. Every hospital should have a WOC nurse like Eileen on their staff to help patients like myself who have so much to learn about caring for their new colostomy.





## *Recognize the Dedication*

The premier organizations for the education and certification of WOC nurses are the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) and the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB®), respectively. The WOCN® Society promotes education of WOC nurses as provided by a WOCN®-accredited Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Education Program (WOCNEP). Competency is demonstrated by completing a WOCN®-accredited WOCNEP and/or achieving certification through the WOCNCB® (WOCN® Society-WOCNCB®, 2008).

### **Education**

WOCNEPs are formal educational programs with a long, successful history dating back to the 1960s. WOCNEPs may provide tri-specialty education (wound, ostomy, continence) or any of the specialties individually. Programs adhere to a specific educational curriculum to insure the highest level of education to effectively prepare the WOC specialty nurse. WOCNEPs are unique in the extent of didactic instruction in specialty and professional practice content and precepted clinical experiences (Bonham, 2009). Only WOCN®-accredited WOCNEPs provide an organized, specialty education course for nurses in the areas of ostomy and continence care in addition to wound care.

Only registered nurses with at minimum a baccalaureate degree or higher, and a minimum of one-year clinical nursing experience are eligible to attend a WOCN®-accredited WOCNEP. Successful graduates of the WOCNEPs have demonstrated competency to enter specialty nursing practice. Information about each WOCN®-accredited WOCNEP available can be found on the WOCN® Society's website ([www.wocn.org](http://www.wocn.org)).



## Certification

The WOCNCB® sets high standards for certification eligibility. To be eligible for the WOCNCB® examination(s), an applicant must be licensed as an RN and hold a baccalaureate degree. The applicant must also complete either a WOCN®-accredited WOCNEP within five years of the exam, OR provide evidence of post baccalaureate experience to include 50 contact hours (CEU; or equivalent in college work) during the last five years, within each specialty for which certification is sought; and 1,500 clinical experience hours during the last five years, within each specialty for which certification is sought (375 hours of the 1,500 clinical experience hours should be completed within the year prior to the exam; WOCNCB®, 2010).

“ Accreditation by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies validates that the WOCNCB® certification process and programs meet our goals to provide specialty certification that protects the public and serves our certificants with quality. Further, accreditation indicates that the operational structure and management of the WOCNCB® meet and even exceed certification industry standards for legal, regulatory and association management compliance. ”





## *Recognize the Experience*

A WOC nurse possesses a strong background in evidence based practice and focuses on prevention and management of complications related to wound, ostomy and continence care. WOC nurses produce better patient outcomes, reduce costs and increase patient satisfaction.

### **Differences in Wound Care**

Studies have shown that patients who were cared for by WOC nurses had better outcomes in terms of healing rates and/or costs of care compared to patients cared for by other nurses (Arnold & Weir, 1994; Bolton et al., 2004; Harris, & Shannon, 2008; Peirce, Tiffany, Kinsey, & Link, 2008).

Wounds of all types are an increasing problem and the increased focus on pressure ulcers has attracted attention and increased interest in wound care and wound specialists. WOC nurses have the education, experience, and credentials necessary to provide top-notch wound care. WOC nurses have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the etiology, pathology, wound healing process, principles of topical and adjunctive therapy, and wound treatment. WOC nurses are prepared by education and experience to develop and implement wound management programs, deliver expert clinical care, and provide oversight to maximize healing outcomes.

As the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) transitions to value-based purchasing, the value of WOC nursing is easily identified as facilities and agencies implement best practices to prevent pressure ulcers and catheter-associated urinary tract infections. The emphasis on preventive care is mandated across all care settings, particularly as families increasingly care for aging relatives with functional declines (WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society, 2010). WOC nurses are experts in providing the comprehensive prevention measures and care planning necessary to reduce the frequency of these conditions.

Specialized skills/abilities of the WOC nurse for wound care include: comprehensive assessment, product selection, advanced treatment modalities, nutritional assessment/support, performing conservative sharp instrumental wound debridement, chemical cautery, managing complex wounds with fistulae, tubes or drains; recommending prevention strategies including support surfaces for pressure redistribution, and consulting and collaborating to coordinate complex treatment modalities and adjunctive therapies (WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society, 2010).







“ As one who found himself facing health issues and life altering changes that needed careful consideration, when I needed calm reassurance and knowledgeable and caring support, that support came in the form of two wonderful WOC nurses. Frankly, I could not have been treated better by my surgeon and his support staff, but the ability to spend time with these two fine professional nurses enabled me to learn what I needed to become self-sufficient and confident in my abilities to move forward. Because of them, living with a stoma is as natural as my life was prior to my surgery. I have the opportunity to undergo surgeries to reverse and reconnect, but honestly, I don't believe that is necessary to enhance the quality of my life.”

### Differences in Ostomy Care

WOC nurses provide superior ostomy care. Specialty education for nurses in ostomy care is only provided by WOCN<sup>®</sup>-accredited WOCNEPs and the only certification in ostomy care is from the WOCNCB<sup>®</sup>. Patients undergoing ostomy surgery, whether temporary or permanent, require intensive physical and emotional care as well as continuing support to return to their normal lives. For patients across all settings with fecal and urinary diversions, fistulas, and tubes, WOC nurses provide this specialized care. The goal is maximizing independence in self-care as well as helping patients adapt to this life-altering change in body image. Specialty care is provided throughout the continuum of care and may include stoma site selection, pre and postoperative management and education, complex prosthetic fitting, product selection, treatment of peristomal skin complications, sexual counseling, dietary counseling, and vocational counseling. The need for specialty care continues well beyond the immediate surgical period. WOC nurses provide long-term support to patients with permanent ostomies through support groups and follow-up care (WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society, 2010).

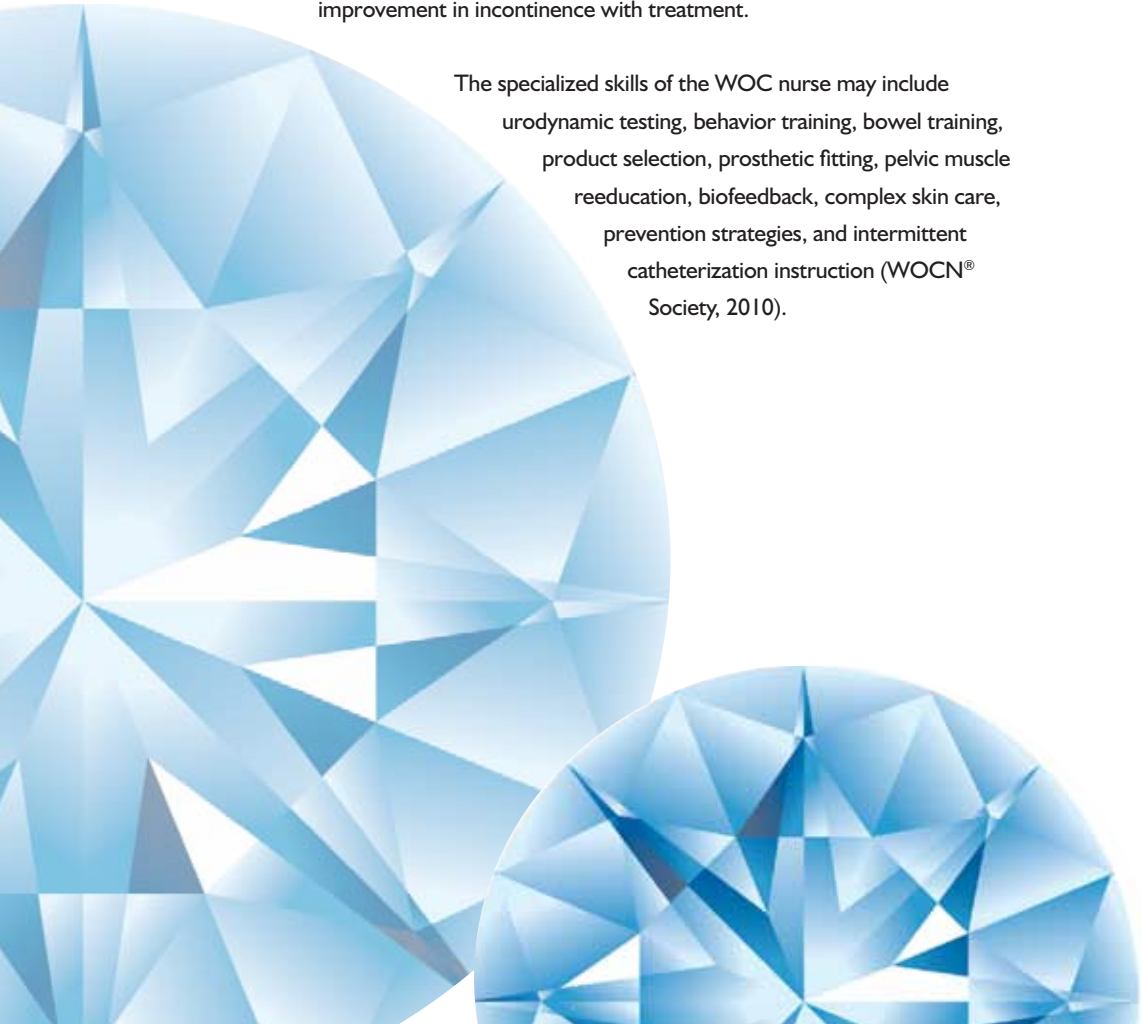
As our population ages, the need for ostomy care and services will increase. To ensure patients remain independent as long as possible, adaptive equipment for those with sensory deficits or functional limitations require the specialized knowledge, teaching, and collaboration of the WOC nurse (WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society, 2010).

## Differences in Continence Care

Caring for individuals with urinary and/or fecal incontinence is a billion-dollar industry. The prevalence of incontinence is exemplified by the increasing advertising dollars spent promoting the products that treat it. Urinary incontinence affects one out of 10 community-dwelling adults and one of three residents of long-term care facilities. Fecal incontinence affects more than 2 percent of community-dwelling adults and 12 percent or more of extended-care patients. We can only anticipate that the prevalence will continue to increase as our population ages (WOCN® Society, 2010).

WOC nurses specializing in this treatment area help manage patients with incontinence due to muscle or nerve dysfunction, congenital anomalies, infection, surgery, sphincter deficiencies, and psychological disorders. Fortunately, many patients can be cured or at least experience improvement in incontinence with treatment.

The specialized skills of the WOC nurse may include urodynamic testing, behavior training, bowel training, product selection, prosthetic fitting, pelvic muscle reeducation, biofeedback, complex skin care, prevention strategies, and intermittent catheterization instruction (WOCN® Society, 2010).







## *Recognize the Difference a WOC Nurse Makes in Your Facility*



With experience comes wisdom and expertise, and the great amount of education and preparation required to be a WOC nurse enables the nurse to deliver and coordinate excellent skilled care. There are distinct advantages to employing a WOC nurse who has met the rigorous requirements to complete a WOCNEP and obtain a WOCNCB® certification.

The expert clinical skills of the WOC nurse are just one aspect of their role that enhances and facilitates patient care. Though direct care may comprise the greater part of many WOC nurse's role; just as important, are other roles in the scope of practice for WOC nurses. In today's health care climate of rising costs, the WOC nurse plays an important role in facilitating cost containment and enhancing revenue. The WOC nurse also enhances regulatory compliance, particularly in the areas of wound and continence management (WOCN® Society, 2010).

WOC nurses improve patient care across all settings through advocacy, patient/family education, research, and the achievement of positive clinical outcomes (WOCN® Society, 2010). These achievements are accomplished through a variety of activities including the following (WOCN® Society, 2010):

- ◆ Formulary development for supply management.
- ◆ Developing protocols for cost-effective resource utilization.
- ◆ Proactive risk management.
- ◆ Preventing complications and reducing recidivism.
- ◆ Improving the continuity and coordination of care across settings.
- ◆ Increasing staff productivity.
- ◆ Facilitating reimbursement.
- ◆ Developing new revenue-producing programs.
- ◆ Enhancing patient satisfaction and loyalty.
- ◆ Advocating for supply and service reimbursement.
- ◆ Quality assurance.
- ◆ Staff education and orientation.
- ◆ Developing policy and procedures and standards for documentation.
- ◆ Participating in research and/or utilization of evidence-based care.

“ We profoundly appreciate the expertise and effort our WOC nurse extends to our patients. This is a much needed skill that many facilities lack. ”



## *Make the Clear Choice*

As the administrator or decision-maker in your facility, it is important you understand the differences in a nurse's basic education, specialty educational preparation (didactic, precepted clinical), nursing experience, and certification/recertification requirements for each area of WOC nursing practice. Your choice should be based on the needs of your facility. If you are looking for a nurse to be solely responsible for managing patients with WOC needs, there is only one choice...a WOC nurse.

If you are in charge of hiring for your facility, be sure to review the facts. Do not make a decision based only on credentials or salary alone. Do not risk the quality of your patient care. Be sure to hire a WOC specialty nurse educated by a WOCN®-accredited WOCNEP and/or certified by the WOCNCB®.

### How do you find a WOC specialty nurse?

WOC nurses can be educated, certified, and practice in one or more areas of wound, ostomy, continence nursing. Both the WOCN® Society and the WOCNCB® websites provide a search feature to locate a WOC nurse in your area. The WOCN® Society website ([www.wocn.org](http://www.wocn.org)) has a public directory (located under the "Patient Information" tab) devoted to helping patients find care. The directory allows the patient to search a database of over 2,100 WOCN® Society members (who elect to be in the nurse referral database). However, membership in the WOCN® Society does not guarantee certification. To verify certification credentials, please visit the WOCNCB® website ([www.wocncb.org](http://www.wocncb.org)).

### What are the credentials?

Look for the following WOCNCB® credentials awarded based on the successful completion of the rigorous certification process:

<b>CWOCN®</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse
<b>CWCN®</b>	Certified Wound Care Nurse
<b>COCN®</b>	Certified Ostomy Care Nurse
<b>CCCN®</b>	Certified Continence Care Nurse
<b>CWON™</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse
<b>CWOCN-AP™</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse Advance Practice
<b>CWON-AP™</b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse Advance Practice
<b>CWCN-AP™</b>	Certified Wound Care Nurse Advance Practice
<b>COCN-AP™</b>	Certified Ostomy Nurse Advance Practice
<b>CCCN- AP™</b>	Certified Continence Care Nurse Advance Practice
<b>CFCN®</b>	Certified Foot Care Nurse

Numerous wound credentials are currently available with varying requirements. For more information about differences in wound care credentialing programs, please refer to the website for a comparison of wound care certification programs ([http://www.wocncb.org/become-certified/how\\_to\\_choose.pdf](http://www.wocncb.org/become-certified/how_to_choose.pdf)).



## About the WOCN® Society

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) is a clinician-based professional organization with more than 4,800 members who treat individuals with wound, ostomy and continence needs and are committed to cost-effective and outcome-based health care. The WOCN® Society supports a comprehensive health care system focused on wellness that maximizes patient health and minimizes long-range costs. The WOCN® Society is dedicated to assuring the availability of appropriate care for individuals with wounds, ostomies, and continence needs because patients deserve health care that helps them maximize their functional status. The WOCN® Society encourages the appropriate use of specialty nurses to assure that its goal of giving the most beneficial care in the most cost-effective manner is met ([www.wocn.org](http://www.wocn.org)).

## About the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Certification Board

The WOCNCB® is a professional organization dedicated to promoting the highest standard of consumer care and safety by providing credentialing in the areas of WOC nursing. The WOCNCB® has its own governing board and is a distinct and separate organization from the WOCN® Society. WOCNCB® credentialing provides formal recognition of this commitment to high standards in WOC nursing. Certification provides formal recognition of knowledge as a wound, ostomy and/or continence care nurse beyond that gained from traditional nursing education programs. The WOCNCB® stands firmly in its belief that WOC certification improves the level and quality of patient care by defining and maintaining competency within the WOC specialties. Furthermore, certification provides a competitive advantage for employment and promotes job satisfaction. The nurse who chooses to certify demonstrates a commitment to WOC nursing practice and patient protection ([www.wocncb.org](http://www.wocncb.org)).

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (WOCN®) is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

The WOCN® Society is approved by the California Board of Registered Nursing, Provider Number 15115.

The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Accreditation refers to educational content only and does not imply ANCC, AANP, CBRN or WOCN® Society endorsement of any product or service.

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