

Diversity and solidarity are our strength

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“Diversity is the magic. It is the first manifestation, the first beginning of the differentiation of a thing and of simple identity. The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.”

Thomas Berry

Since the very early creation of our specialty, which was initially only stoma care, Norma had the vision to disseminate and promote the specific knowledge and skills needed on a global level. She succeeded in setting up the very first Enterostomal Therapy (ET) Education Program, inviting individuals from different countries to fly to Cleveland, Ohio, USA, to be trained¹. She was also able to create, with other pioneers, our WCET® association from inception, and later our association Journal. We have come a long way, here we are today with more than 70 WCET® Recognised Enterostomal Therapy Nursing Education Programs (ETNEPs) and Recognised Education Programs (REPs) around the world. We have Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with some countries who have well-developed national programs². These programs train and graduate new ET/ Wound Ostomy Continence (WOC)/ Stoma Wound Continence (SWC)/ Stoma Nurses who are better able to care for the millions of patients living with stomas, wounds, fistula, and/or those suffering with continence issues.

Thanks to Dr Elizabeth A Ayello's family, we have received a significant donation to spend on ETNEP/REP Scholarships. Since the COVID-19 pandemic we have not received any applications for ETNEP/REP Scholarships, despite advertising. All application forms can be found on our website along with application instructions. Ensuring all necessary documentation is included with the application is important³. Only completed forms will be reviewed, allowing the committee to allocate funds as equitably as possible, among the eligible applicants while remaining within the budget.

With more than 62 countries represented, WCET® has a diverse membership, with different professional backgrounds and roles, but also with different socio-economic, cultural and religious entities, as you will discover in reading our article reporting the results of our 2023 WCET® Membership Survey.

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The main results are presented for the first time ahead of the biennial Congress.

The timing of the membership survey was not optimal, being around the same time as membership renewal. Additionally, the time given to complete the survey was shorter than in previous surveys. Unfortunately, this could not be avoided as we were also working on the Executive Board (EB) nominations and elections, and our annual EB face to face/hybrid meeting. Having said that, as you will read in our article, results are comparable with previous surveys, when response rates were higher. The results have provided enough insight to allow assessment of our previous strategic plan and to develop the new one, including some fundraising ideas. A huge thank you goes to all of you who gave the time to complete the survey, your voice has been heard.

You are, and always have been, our shining light showing us the way forward. We learn from all of you through various interactions: by reading your publications in the journal, by attending your oral and poster presentations at Congress, your stories in each of our BULLETin issues⁴, from your International Delegates biennial reports⁵ and directly from you in your emails.

This strength in our diversity is valued more than ever because of population mobility worldwide. We will be calling on you again as we commence working on the new edition of our International Ostomy Guideline⁶. Some see diversity as a threat, however WCET® has always understood its value, even though there are some challenges. The varied perspectives brought by diversity is our real strength.

The WCET® continues to extend its relationships with other related organisations, we believe together we are stronger. One example is the European Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel. President Laurent Chabal has been invited to be a part of the Scientific Committee for the annual conference, which will be held in Lausanne, Switzerland and WCET® will chair a session. Besides demonstrating our willingness to work with others, it is also a great opportunity to increase awareness for our tri-specialty of stoma, wound and continence care.

This [northern hemisphere] summer, in a non-Congress year, we had the opportunity to meet in person as EB Members. This is the first time since Glasgow, UK in 2019 where we planned to hold the 2020 Congress. Unfortunately not all EB members were able to join, hopefully we will accomplish this in Glasgow

in 2024⁷. As always, WCET® seized this challenge and turned it into a positive opportunity, testing new ways to communicate and work, using Microsoft TEAMS, enabling WCET® to move forward in its mission. Please read our latest BULLETin issue 3, to learn more about this meeting.

EB members submitted annual reports and action items which were discussed. This demonstrated, once again, the enormous amount of work achieved in such a short period of time. WCET® keeps us all very busy, Denise and I cannot thank our volunteer EB members and outstanding supporters enough for their hard work. We also appreciate our management company, publisher, editorial team, Congress Coordinator, bookkeeper, accountant, Education and NNGF® Committee Members, our panel members, and our IDs, for their ongoing commitment and support. Without all of them and you, our members, we would not be able to run this organisation and in turn be able to provide resources for the ET/ WOC/ SWC community.

One of the action items approved, after consultation and advice from the Constitution Advisory Panel, was to create the WCET® President Alumni Panel. The aim of this panel is to honour the work of the WCET® Past Presidents, while ensuring the experience, knowledge and wisdom gained during their presidency, along with WCET® history, is not lost. All Past Presidents have been invited to join, the ones who have accepted will be acknowledged annually and will benefit from special membership credits. More on this can be found in the updated Policy and Procedure Manuel, posted under the Members Library on the website⁵.

As you may know, WCET® tries to move from continent to continent for the biennial Congress, without requesting bids, so that each WCET® member has a chance to be part of this unique educational event. Our next Biennial (joint) Congress with the ASCN-UK will be in Glasgow, UK and will be a face-to-face meeting. WCET® Congress Travel Scholarships are now open but will close on February 28th 2024. Please consider applying if you are eligible. For the ASCN UK members, the Jean Preston fund is available, while for the non-WCET® and ASCN UK members, a general scholarship fund is also available, increasing the opportunity to participate! Only those who apply soon will have the opportunity, as availability is according to a budget approved at our last General Business Meeting. So do not miss out, apply now.

Please follow updates related to Congress through our website^{3,7}. Abstract submission is now open. Previous (for Glasgow 2020) abstract submitters will be asked to review their submissions in order to update as needed or to withdraw - we cannot wait to review your submissions. Denise and I take this opportunity to thank all members of the organising and scientific committees, and the supportive team, for the work accomplished behind the scenes to help make this event a success. We cannot wait to see you all in person and celebrate our diversity with you.

We graciously thank our Sustaining Journal Partners, Aroa™, Calmoseptine®, Coloplast®, Convatec, Dansac, Hollister®,

Welland, and Wound Care Plus, and the supporters of our journal's professional translations, Calmoseptine® and Coloplast, for their ongoing support. The WCET® Journal, which is just one of our members favorite resources, is the only nursing journal published in five languages, giving members the opportunity to read our journal in Chinese, French, Portuguese, Spanish and English. In our strategy to increase visibility, we are thrilled to announce that past journals (beyond 12 months) are now available in open access.

I will finish this joint message with a personal note of heartfelt thanks. Recently, with the help of Denise Hibbert, Fiona Bolton and Nuntika Huntonpong (Yui), we were able to provide a patient, moving to Thailand, with contacts to obtain stoma supplies and access to ET/ WOC Nursing support, while in a local area in Thailand. A very special thankyou to Paris Purnell from Hollister for his support in providing these contacts. Another special thanks to Mario Verrier, Coloplast Swiss Romande representative (French-speaking part of the country), for his support regarding wound care samples for the last COMHLEI (Latin American Official Confederation for Wound, Ostomy and Continence Care) conference.

Working together for the greater good makes the world a smaller place!

This, for me, is what the WCET® stands for: supporting each other and standing together in solidarity towards the best patient care, connecting together across the globe, including patients and industry partners, for the best outcomes. YOU have, once again, made me proud and honored to be a part of the WCET®.

Please help us to continue connecting every country to provide the support needed.

WCET® would not be WCET® without you. You are our way forward, your diversity our guiding light.

Many thanks for your support and for all that you do daily.

Sincerely

Laurent and Denise

REFERENCES

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