

Editorial

Wounds Australia's Five Point Plan to Reduce the Burden of Chronic Wounds

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The burden of chronic wounds for the individual, the health system and the whole community is familiar to the readers of this journal. Improving lives and saving money through better wound care is a common theme across this issue, and in the broader wound care activities.

Wounds Australia recognises that to achieve our vision of *Quality wound care and prevention for all* requires us to inform and engage with a broad audience. During Wound Awareness Week from 15 to 21 July 2018 Wounds Australia will launch our Five Point Plan to Reduce the Burden of Chronic Wounds. Our plan outlines 5 key initiatives to drive the change for best practice wound care for all Australians and reduce the suffering as a result of chronic wounds.

1. Medicare funding for treatment of chronic wounds in primary health care. A dedicated MBS item for treatment of chronic wounds to enable GPs, nurses and allied health professionals to deliver the best practice.

2. Subsidised wound products (dressings and related products) for people experiencing long term wound care. Advanced Wound management products often attract a premium cost. Selecting low cost, modest outcome products is a false economy. Research has shown that the use of less expensive dressings actually increases costs of treating a wound. Subsidising out of pocket expenditure for appropriate products will deliver considerable savings to the health system.

3. Raise awareness of the chronic wound epidemic through a public health campaign. We need to raise community awareness and improve health literacy so that Australians understand the warning signs of chronic wounds and the availability of treatment for wounds that are not

healing. Australian Government investment of \$2 million over 4 years would enable roll out of a health awareness campaign that focusses on prevention and early access to treatment.

4. Wound Care training for primary health care and aged care workforces, particularly in rural and remote areas. Access to training for those at the frontline of wound care treatment is needed. Evidence has shown that inconsistencies in wound management practice and outdated methods of practice contribute to high costs and poor patient outcomes. An investment of \$0.75 million would enable Wounds Australia to develop and rollout wound care training for these frontline clinicians.

5. Map care pathways for chronic wound care. Access to wound care is complex and confusing for patients and their families, particularly those in rural and remote areas. Availability of specialist wound care and the supply and availability of wound products is variable. Wounds Australia is seeking an investment of \$0.65 million to conduct a national mapping exercise to identify pathways between primary health care and specialist services for chronic wound care. This would improve service planning, address access issues and reduce costly delays in referrals to specialist services.

Wounds Australia will be seeking commitments from all political parties to reduce the burden of chronic wounds by supporting these initiatives. The plan is available at www.woundsaustralia.com.au.

Anne Buck
CEO Wounds Australia

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