

## BLOG

# The Payoff of Wound Care Education: Get a Return on Your Investment

By Terrey L. Hatcher, on April 18, 2022

Specialized wound care education reaps financial and human rewards that can give you a trackable return on investment. The human side focuses on positive patient outcomes, naturally, but benefits also include clinician engagement and retention. Financial rewards of wound care education flow outward from the human benefits.

Your business model revolves around competent clinicians, care quality, and reimbursements. And your wound care education investment can help in all those areas.

## Results of Your Wound Care Education Investment

When you invest in educating clinicians as wound care specialists, you can put your organization in a stronger business position by:

- Developing a team with clinical expertise in wound and ostomy care.
- Promoting a culture of knowledge and awareness of current standards of wound care.
- Providing consistent, evidence-based care and thorough documentation.
- Reducing the number of hospital- or facility-acquired pressure injuries, which are nonreimbursable.
- Avoiding penalties and legal risks that go along with inaccurate assessments, incomplete documentation, and preventable pressure injuries.
- Increasing reimbursements by effectively treating more clinically complex patients.
- Reducing hospital readmission rates by consistently attending to risk factors.
- Improving employee retention by investing in education and competency enhancement.
- Building your reputation as a wound care center of excellence.

## Develop Clinical Expertise in Wound Care



### Terrey L. Hatcher

Director of Content Marketing, Relias

Terrey Hatcher has more than two decades of expertise crafting content focused on professional development, marketing, tech, and education. At Relias, she collaborates with physicians, nurses, clinicians, and other experts to produce our award-winning content and communications.

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Wound care certification education is the starting point for ramping up your organization's expertise in this area. Strong, consistent wound assessment and treatment drives results, as Patricia A. Slachta, PhD, APRN, ACNS-BC, CWOCN, noted in a recent Relias [webinar](#).

Proper wound care certification education equips clinicians with information on the latest evidence-based practices for managing different types of wounds. Ensure that you are relying on accredited programs that incorporate adult learning principles to prepare clinicians for their specialty roles. This preparation should include updates on the latest products and innovative treatments available. As a result, your informed clinicians can choose the right treatment for each patient's needs and reduce treatment costs.

For instance, clinicians dealing with coronavirus disease patients need to quickly find expert advice on effective treatment protocols. One area of concern is COVID-19 patients who have acute respiratory distress syndrome, or ARDS, and are placed in prone positions. Clinicians treating patients with ARDS need to be aware of risks related to prone positioning and tips for [preventing pressure injuries](#).

### **Promote a Culture of Knowledge and Awareness**

For the best outcomes, it is important to educate not just your nurses, but all members of the multidisciplinary clinical team. By doing so, you create an environment where the team can develop care plans that improve healing rates and lower incidence rates.

When even one nurse becomes a specialist in wound care, that informed clinician can spread specialized knowledge throughout the care team. A nurse with advanced wound care knowledge can encourage others to replace outdated practices with proven, evidence-based strategies in wound care.

### **Increase Reimbursements Based on Clinical Complexity**

Medicare payment models in skilled nursing and home health provide incentives for clinicians to be well versed in specialty areas such as skin and wound care. Chronic wounds affect about 15% of Medicare beneficiaries each year.

Complex, chronic wounds are a factor in qualifying a patient for the clinically complex category under the Patient Driven Payment Model (PDPM) for skilled nursing facilities. An infected wound and the presence of an unhealed stage 4 pressure injury would add points to a patient's non-therapy ancillary comorbidity score. Therefore, this score affects the PDPM reimbursement calculation.

For home health agencies, wounds are one of 12 clinical groupings the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) identifies under the Patient-Driven Groupings Model. In home health, clinicians filed 6 million wound care claims in 2019.

### **Build Your Reputation as a Specialist**

By ensuring that your organization is known for its clinical expertise and positive outcomes related to skin and wound care, you can gain referrals for patients with complex needs. That is another potential payoff of your wound care education investment.

When team members are well educated, they can quickly find research to guide prevention and treatment of chronic wounds.

Clinicians educated through Relias Wound Care can network with other certified specialists and discuss the latest standards of care through discussion groups.

### Minimize Risk and Liability

As clinicians assess patients' skin conditions and treat wounds, it is vital that the [documentation and coding](#) is clear, accurate, and consistent. Knowing how to correctly document wound care assessments and actions taken will protect the clinician and the organization.

Of course, CMS will not reimburse for costs associated with hospital- or facility-acquired pressure injuries. Therefore, accurate assessment on admission is crucial.

Gaps in assessment, prevention, and care of wounds can put your organization at risk of unnecessary expenses and [lawsuits](#). More than 17,000 lawsuits related to pressure injuries are filed each year, according to the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#).

Education can reinforce proper wound care documentation, which is vital to any legal defense.

### Reduce Hospital Readmissions

When certified clinicians know the risk factors and appropriate strategies to prevent pressure injuries, they can produce better patient outcomes. Research has shown that facilities with certified wound care specialists on staff can reduce their rates of high-risk pressure injuries.

Any facility-acquired pressure injury can harm a patient and your organization. By educating your team to prevent pressure injuries, you can reduce hospital readmissions and poor ratings on your [CMS quality measures](#).

### Improve Employee Retention

Clinicians educated in a [Relias wound care program](#) use evidence-based practices in preventive measures, interventions, and frequency of dressing changes. As a result, they can strategically choose appropriate procedures and materials that promote healing and reduce supply and care costs.

With your wound care education investment, you can open up paths for professional growth and enhanced patient care. Investing in your clinicians in this way can promote confidence and personal satisfaction in their jobs. Of course, employees with growth options and feelings of efficacy are more likely to stay with your organization longer.

### Check Your Status and Invest Wisely

Considering the potential payoff from wound care education, you may find it wise to conduct a strategic review. Find out your team's current level of knowledge by surveying your clinicians and leaders. Look at your patient outcomes.

If you see opportunities for growth, consider investing in wound care education for your team. In return, you can optimize patient healing, retain talented clinicians, and strengthen your financial standing against your competition. All those factors add up to a highly valued return on your wound care education investment.

*Editor's note: This post was originally published in January 2021 and has been updated.*

#### Interested in Learning More?



#### Driving Return on Investment for Wound Care Education

Knowing how to prevent, assess, and treat wounds such as pressure injuries can bring rewards that include reduced financial risks, better patient outcomes, and higher quality ratings. Find out more by reading our white paper and accessing our customizable ROI calculator tool.

[Access the white paper and ROI tool →](#)