



Association for the Advancement of Wound Care WIN Summer Newsletter 2011

Happy Birthday to the AAWC WIN Newsletter! We are one year old. AAWC sincerely hopes that this newsletter has given you some helpful information. It is our goal is to offer support, facts and benefits that help increase the quality of life for patients and their lay caregivers.



The WIN Article contest picks up again. AAWC will award \$100 for an article written, submitted and approved to be included in our next edition.

The theme for our next contest is....

What is the best way to keep a good frame of mind when dealing with a hard to heal wound?



Please send your article to kstrauss@aawconline.org by 15 Oct.

AAWC AUGUST CONTEST WINNER

The AAWC Article Contest winner is Jeffrey Gatano. Jeffro has generously donated the \$100 contest winnings back to the WIN group. The AAWC WIN team sends great thanks to Jeff for this gift and his well written, thoughtful article printed below.

AAWC has free Patient/Caregiver memberships. Would you or your personal caregiver benefit from our Association's offerings? AAWC wants to grow our membership so that we bring patients and caregivers together to help decrease any feelings of "going it alone". We want to help! Become a member and this newsletter along with many other benefits will be available to you.

Contact kstrauss@aawconline.org.



WINNING ARTICLE

If you could give advice to your clinician about how to treat the person and not just the problem, what would you say?

Dear Clinician,

I know you work hard and you must love what you do to carry on with your professional choice. There is no question that your job is tough on many levels. Keep in mind, your patients are human beings rather than cardboard cut-outs – and they are all unique. No one comes to you with a “how to” sheet on making someone feel at ease or how to keep them from getting sad, worked up, depressed or mad.

My name is Jeff, but you can call me Jeffro. That’s what my friends call me. My dad nicknamed me as a child and it has stuck all 38 years of my life. I was a fearless kid, running across fallen trees in the river, jumping off “cliffs” into the unknown waters of a nearby creek full of odd water spiders and snakes. Climbing trees and other things that, let’s just say, no person should climb. I remember a statue in Valley Forge National Park. I was left alone for five minutes, and there my mother found me, sitting on top of a life-size statue, straddling the horse and hugging the bronzed face of General Anthony Wayne. The statue sets upon a base of Missouri Red Granite, and the total height of my venture took me 22 feet off the ground! I led a normal boyhood, except for one thing. I was found to have kidney failure at the age of 13. It has not stopped my zest for life. In fact, I wanted to become what I valued most at the time – a kind-hearted clinician; but, after 3 years of nursing school, my health issues took over my life and I had to “delay” my studies.

I am a former wound patient who has suffered many surgeries in my lifetime, including battling a non-healing stomach abscess in my early 20s, which included a hospital born infection (VRE). I am a dialysis patient of over 22 years due to end stage renal failure, which in case you’re wondering was due to strep throat as a child. I have survived three (yes 3) failed kidney transplants, one of which caused the abscess. I’ve come close to meeting my maker a few times, and I have been given my last rights twice.



I am beating the odds. This is in part because I have been inspired to keep at it. As someone who has been there, all I can tell you to keep in mind is this:

- I’m a person, just like you. I may not be your brother, father, uncle, or long-time friend. Just please treat me as if I could be. We will likely become close over the course of my care. I’d like to look forward to seeing you, even though I have to cope with treatments under your orders or hand.
- Take some time. Please don’t seem as if you are in a hurry and that I am just one more number to check off the list. There is a good chance that if you can mask how busy you really are, I can put on a smile despite my pain.
- There is a very good chance, I do not know what you are saying if you talk in medical terms. But please do not talk to me like I am beneath you or a child. Just talk to me, not at me, and use plain words that I can relate to. I could be an “Taikonaut.” And if you don’t know what that is, there is a good chance that speaking about what I do as one would puzzle you. Just talk in laymen’s terms by defining the “big words.” This will teach me, and knowing what you are talking about is half the battle.

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WINNING ARTICLE

- Let me ask questions, and if I don't ask any, ask me if I have any. I might be scared or overwhelmed. Ask a few questions, such as "Do you wonder how long this will take?" or "Are you feeling certain that we can work together to get this healed?" I may be afraid and need more help than you can give. But please just ask, find more help for me and let me know that it is okay to be afraid. You should not be afraid to admit you are not a cure-all health provider. Make use of your network to treat my wound.
- Think about me personally. If I am not new to all of this, I likely have a better handle on what is going on than someone brand new to the situation. Perhaps you are meeting me for the first time to see if I am a candidate for a forth kidney transplant. After sitting on a dialysis machine and often teaching the techs some tricks of the trade, what I likely need is a cheerleader – someone to give support, help comfort and drive me to make the right choices. Let's face it, I have been doing this for 22 years, I've wanted to give up more times than you can guess. After that, let's get down to business as you guide me to be healthy.
- If I just found out my life has changed forever, please do not treat me like a statistic. Plan a little extra time. I was 13 and scared when I heard my fate. I don't think I'd react any differently if I were 38 or 62. Pretend we've been friends a while, and bring some tissues, because I may need a shoulder to cry on and a member of my family may not be there for me.

I guess it all sounds pretty simple, huh? This is not news to you, I am sure this was taught to you (at least I hope so.) Hopefully when our paths meet again, it will be somewhere in the South Pacific – perhaps Tahiti – trading stories while enjoying our retirements. After all isn't that our goal to someday retire from our life's work? To look back on life and the many moments that shaped our lives. To feel comforted in knowing that we made an impact in the world?

For some of us, our difference will be what we brought to the science of wound care as a patient on which for you to practice. Without us, the all too many of us, the field of wound care would not carry on. Imagine you met someone with a wound in your office but once per year? It may be thousands of years before science and the clinical practice that follows would be as first rate as it is today. So please treat the millions of us as the treasure to the field of wound care. My life makes a difference just as yours. I am the brave one placing my faith in your hands, and you are my "bronze horse" – the one leading me forward to healing every day.

I've enjoyed offering my advice. As for my trip to Valley Forge Park as a child and my climb to greet the fearless General Anthony Wayne... upon my return to the park, ironically I found there are words on the monument. It simply reads, "Lead Me Forward."

Until Tahiti,

Jeffro, AAWC Patient Advocate and AAWC Member



Wounds Talking Now

Hi, we're the wounds on your legs and feet. Have you noticed pain in your legs or feet, dry and flakey skin, or that there is no hair on your legs? Are your toenails thick and are there scabs on your toes? Maybe you've also noticed that your toes and feet turn red and blue when you hang them down and pale white when you put them up, or that your feet or toes feel cold. These are all signs that you need to tell your doctor about us. If you don't and he or she doesn't find us soon, we will likely get worse and infected.

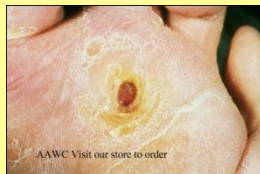
If we aren't going away, it's because we need oxygen to heal. Just as you need oxygen to breathe, providing us with oxygen will help blood get through the tiny *blood vessels, so we can heal and you can feel and look better again.

Blood gets to us, your wounds, through your blood vessels. The blood vessels on the leg and foot are farthest away from the heart. This makes it hard to get enough blood flow to wounds. Also, people with high blood sugar often have clogged and hardened blood vessels, which also makes it harder for blood to get to us. There are large blood vessels that go down the leg to bring blood to your foot. Then the blood travels through tiny blood vessels to get to your skin.

It is like watering your lawn. There is a large hose which carries the water out to the grass. Then a sprinkler carries smaller amounts of water to each blade of grass. If not enough water comes out, the grass would dry up and die. That is the same thing that happens to people with high blood sugar. The small blood vessels become blocked and they are unable to carry blood to us and help your skin to heal.

There are many ways your doctor can find out how serious we are. He or she can take X-rays or check the blood pressure of your toes. They could also put little sticker with electrodes on the skin near us to tell them how much oxygen we have and if we have the right amount of blood flow to heal without oxygen helping us along.

We had a friend who was a wound on this nice lady who had high blood sugar. The lady's doctor recognized right away that he would need to test the oxygen levels. Within 15 minutes of placing electrodes on the skin near our friend, the wound, the doctor knew that our friend didn't have good oxygen.



The doctor sent the nice lady to a place called an outpatient wound care center where they checked her oxygen numbers and found she could benefit from hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

They placed her in a clear cylinder, called a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. The lady told the technician at the center that it felt just like lying on her sofa at home. They even had a TV in the chamber.

Once in the hyperbaric chamber, our friend, the wound, felt things were going to change. In no time at all, the lady started feeling much better. Tiny, new blood vessels were forming and growing inside our wound friend. The doctor said the oxygen she received in the chamber helped grow the new blood vessels. Within a week, our friend started to look healthy and red and, the new blood flow was also helping to kill off some of the germs that were using up oxygen and nutrients. After a couple weeks, our friend started to get smaller and smaller....we knew it was time for us to say goodbye. Not long after our visit, the doctor put some skin on top of our friend and after a week or two more of oxygen treatments, our friend was gone forever.



Wound Care Puzzle

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Take Good Care of Yourself!

