

Using the web to facilitate successful wound care within a health service

Blanchfield D

This paper briefly describes how a clinical nurse consultant wound care (CNCWC) developed, implemented and marketed a website on wound care for a large Australian area health service. The purpose of the website was to provide an effective user friendly method of disseminating information on wound care practices, wound care products and educational resources available for use within the area health service.

Blanchfield D. Using the web to facilitate successful wound care within a health service. Primary Intention 2005; 13(1): 32-35.

Background

Illawarra Health (IH), in New South Wales, covers a region measuring 242kms north to south. Within the region are nine hospitals and three community health sectors that provide acute, rehabilitative and community based client care. These health sectors are serviced by 2000 full-time equivalent clinical positions filled by both full-time and part-time staff.

One of the services provided across these three sectors is that of a clinical nurse consultant in wound care (CNCWC). Inherent in the role of the CNCWC is the responsibility for keeping staff up-to-date on the latest wound care information, including principles of wound management and recommended wound care products.

The dilemma

How does one CNCWC:

- Provide over 2000 clinical staff with up-to-date wound care education on an ongoing basis?
- Ensure the information is always current?
- Ensure the information is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day?

Debbie Blanchfield

Acting CNC, Wound Care
Illawarra Health
Warilla Community Health Centre
2-18 Belfast Ave, Warilla NSW 2528
Tel: (02) 4296 4200

In the past, strategies that the CNCWC had used to address these needs included the production of wound care manuals, the first being a ring binder version, the second being a bound book. However, people either removed pages from the binders – depleting the information provided when it was needed – or they misplaced the entire manual. There was also the problem of how to update copies of the manual, particularly the bound version, in a timely and cost effective manner.

IH encourages all staff to use computer based information and encourages clinical staff to use the web to obtain up-to-date information. Many sites within IH have webpages, so it seemed that the answer to the dilemma might be to build a website dedicated to providing information on wound care that was up-to-date, easily accessible and reflective of the needs of both staff and clients within IH.

However, this led to many more questions, such as:

- How do you go about making a web page?
- What information should be placed on the web page?
- How was the web page to be kept up-to-date?

Formulating a web page development plan

The key features of the plan were that the CNCWC would:

- Have developing and publishing rights for this page only. For this to happen, permission had to be obtained from IH management and the IT department.
- Provide the wound care information which had been developed for use with IH.
- Maintain the web page on an ongoing base to keep the information up-to-date.

Implementing the plan

In 2002 there was an existing wound care website in IH that contained wound care education schedules, but that was all. It was decided to develop this existing site further.

The site was built using software called Front Page from Microsoft. Like many Microsoft computer based programs, it uses commands and menus common to Microsoft, so it was fairly easy to learn for someone who uses applications such as Microsoft Word. So, although there was no formal training, it was easy to learn from other Front Page users.

Initially, existing wound care information developed for IH was incorporated into the web page, including:

- Principals of wound care, e.g. the IH Wound Care Manual.
- When and where IH wound care education courses were to be held (Figure 1).

As more material was developed, it was added to the web page, including:

- Up-to-date information on the latest wound care methods,

e.g. protocols and procedures for the use of larval therapy (maggots) and how to order them for use in IH.

- Which products to use with which wounds, incorporating an IH internal reference chart for recommendations related to wound products based on wound types (Figure 2). When you click on the brand name it takes you to the level underneath that has the user information.
- How to use wound care products, including information from companies (limited to the stock items agreed for use within IH) on their wound care products. This information details indications and contraindications for the product use and how to apply the product (Figures 3-6).
- The cost of all products and their internal purchase order codes.
- Information developed for client education on wound care, such as brochures on different types of leg ulcers and their management.
- Any related legal issues, e.g. standing orders for wound care, organisational wound care policies, company letters relating to product information.

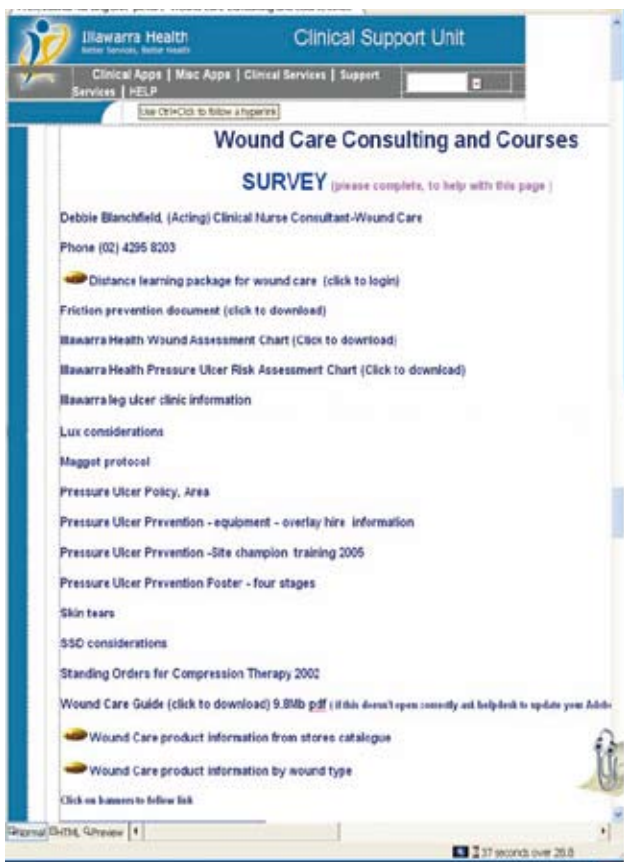


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

- Referral information and location map for the IH leg ulcer clinic.

Companies supplying wound care products to IH were approached to participate in the expanding role of the wound care web page. They were provided with information detailing the aims and objectives of the site and how the provision of information on their products would improve product usage and patient outcomes.

In those instances where product information required was currently available on individual company web pages, direct links were established to this information. In the event that the information required was not on the company web page, the company was asked for a PowerPoint slide presentation of the information needed; this was added as a hyperlink to the product name so it appeared to the end user as a web page. All of the companies were enthusiastic about building the IH wound care web page and were interested in comments about their own web pages – both how well some things were done and if there were points for improvement.

To enable all clinical staff to access these web pages, access authority was signed off by the area director of nursing. Any materials developed for the web page needed to be processed through the normal internal channels for approval before being added to the web page. Material that is not included on the IH web page includes client information or any information that is not approved by management.

Marketing the web page

Once the website was up and working, it was necessary to market the site to advise staff of its availability and change

in focus. A notice was sent out to all staff and, at every opportunity, they were shown how to access the website. For example, if someone rang up to ask a question on wound care that the website could answer, they were referred to the website. This included talking through how to access the site and how to navigate the site obtain the information required. Nurse unit managers (NUMs) were also shown how to use the web page in small group sessions.

Evaluation of the website

Once the website was available and marketing had begun, the question needed to be asked – is the website being used? To assist with this, a counter was added to the site. It was a nice surprise to learn that the website was averaging 800 hits per month.

The next question was – is the site providing the information that staff are seeking? To answer this, a survey was added to the site asking:

- Were staff finding the information they needed on the website?
- Were there any changes to the website that staff would like to see?

The survey results were positive, with respondents stating the website was helpful and that they were finding the information on wound care they were seeking. Respondents also asked for additional information not directly related to wound care but of a clinical nature, e.g. continence and stoma management. These requests were passed on to the respective nurse consultants.

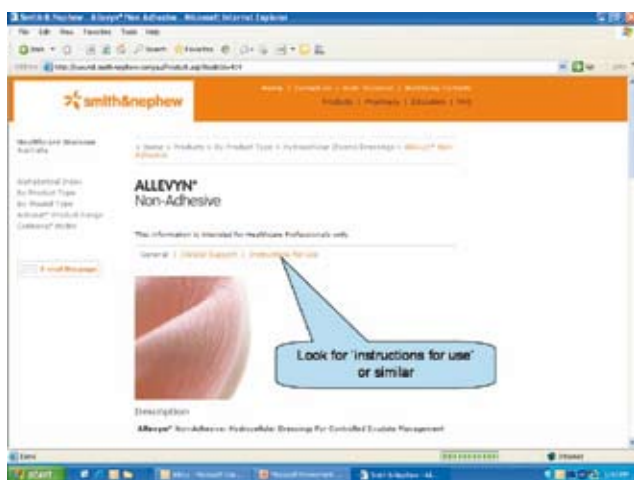


Figure 4

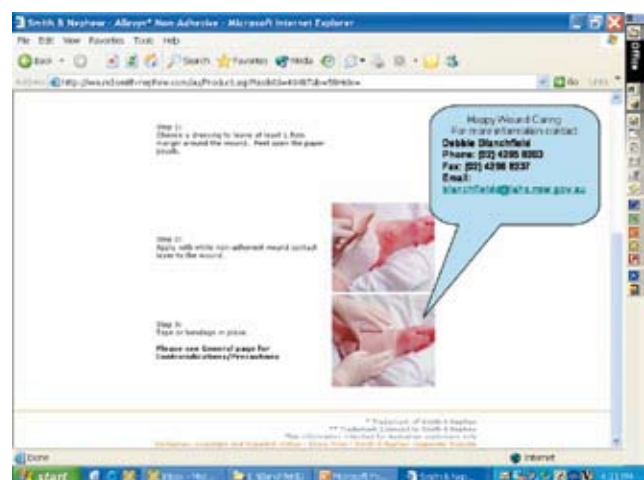


Figure 5

Updating the web page

A website is only as valuable as the information it contains. Therefore it is essential to keep it up-to-date – that means setting aside time to maintain it regularly.

Consideration of this aspect had been part of the pre and post implementation plans. One of the ways that this was achieved was by not reproducing information that was available elsewhere. For instance, in the web pages dedicated to wound care products, the product information was linked to company web pages. In this way, the company retained responsibility for keeping the information up-to-date and there was no need to transcribe the information onto the IH site.

Cost and space for the website

The development and upkeep of the web page has incurred no additional costs to IH. Within IH, there is no internal hosting cost for the site; however, there are sponsorship costs if the sponsored site usage exceeds the allowance per month. To date this has not occurred. The amount of static space the website takes up is 95MB; however, where possible, links to other sites are used which saves static space.

Conclusion

The IH website dedicated to wound care was tailor-made to suit IH clinicians and the needs of their clients. It has been a great success because the wound care website is focussed on and is limited to wound care and wound care topics. It is in effect a 'one stop shop' for all matters related to wound care.

The additional time and cost of setting up the website has been more than compensated by the improvement in knowledge dissemination and the reduction in time taken to update manuals and in answering simple queries on wound management.

This method of delivering up-to-date information could be applied to other services. It is easy to do if you have the right support, and it is worthwhile as it save time for clinicians.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance and support of Michael Potts (Clinical Informatics Manger IH) in the building of the IH wound care website. ■



ALL THE ADVANTAGES OF POLYMEM "THE PINK DRESSING" PLUS THE ANTIMICROBIAL ACTION OF SILVER

- * Reduces Bioburden
- * Wound exudate absorbed into the dressing liberates silver ions from matrix
- * Effective antimicrobial release for full wear-time
- * Will not stain the skin
- * Unique nanoparticle silver
- * 4 square feet of silver area in a 4 1/4" x 4 1/4" pad
- * Kills 99.9% of all bacteria and fungi tested
- * No need to wet OR re-wet
- * No need for secondary dressing
- * Absorbs at least 10 times the dressing weight in exudate
- * "Show-through" back indicates when dressing is to be changed
- * Non-adherent to wound bed
- * Remediate pain



FERRIS
PolyMem
"The Pink Dressing"

Beta Healthcare Pty Ltd
ABN: 26 087 761 859
160 Wecker Road, Mansfield
Qld, 4122, Australia
Toll Free: 1800 025 551