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## Media Backgrounder: Pressure Ulcers

### TORONTO – The facts

- Up to 70 per cent of pressure ulcers are preventable.
- 1 in 4 people in any health-care facility has a pressure ulcer at any given time.
- According to the results of a Canadian Association of Wound Care study to determine the extent of chronic wounds in Canada, the prevalence of pressure ulcers was:
  - 25 per cent in acute care
  - 30 per cent in non-acute care
  - 22 per cent in mixed health-care settings
  - 15 per cent in community care
  - The mean prevalence overall was 26 per cent
- The cost to treat pressure ulcers ranges widely depending on ulcer complexity. A 100-bed facility with a pressure ulcer prevalence of 25 per cent, the national average for acute-care facilities, could expect to spend more than \$750,000 annually on the treatment of pressure ulcers.
- The presence of a pressure ulcer can significantly impair quality of life, may interfere with functional recovery, may be complicated by pain and infection, and can contribute to excesses in length of stay in hospital.
- In some cases the presence of a pressure ulcer can lead to death. Mortality rates are as high as 60 per cent in the elderly with a pressure ulcer within one year of discharge from hospital.

- A pressure ulcer is a change or break in the skin caused by constant pressure, especially over a bony area such as the ankle, tailbone, hip or elbow. It can appear as a red area on the skin or a blister or an open sore.
- Pressure ulcers develop when a person stays for too long in one position without moving. They can also develop when the body is rubbed, dragged or slid against a surface such as bed sheets.
- Pressure ulcers are also known as pressure sores, bedsores and decubitus ulcers.

### **What we're doing**

The Canadian Association of Wound Care works across Canada to promote improved management of wound care through evidence-based clinical practice, education, public policy and research initiatives. We facilitate care for patients suffering from wounds by:

- enhancing consistency and co-ordination of wound care across the Canadian health-care continuum
- educating clinicians, other caregivers, patients and their families and facility administrators about pressure ulcer prevention and early detection
- promoting evidence-based practice by enhancing the scientific rigour of wound research and advocating valid professional standards for wound care
- encouraging co-operation between the Canadian Association of Wound Care and other international, national and regional associations and groups involved in wound care.

The Canadian Association of Wound Care is a non-profit organization of health-care professionals, industry participants, patients and caregivers dedicated to the advancement of wound care in Canada. The CAWC was founded in 1995. For more information visit [www.cawc.net](http://www.cawc.net) or email us at [info@cawc.ca](mailto:info@cawc.ca).