INTRODUCTION
The members of the EWMA education committee have been aware for some time that health professionals are seeking alternative approaches to professional development and have created a unique model that combines attendance at the annual EWMA Conference with academic study at a university of their own choice. This model is called the EWMA University Conference Model (EWMA UCM) and has arisen from a pragmatic desire at future EWMA conferences to:

- Combine academic study with existing professional development activities
- Enable maximum utilisation of expert knowledge & skills
- Utilise excellent facilities & learning resources

The EWMA UCM was piloted in Glasgow in May 2007, proving highly successful. The second EWMA UCM took place in Lisbon in May 2008, where the success of the programme surpassed all expectations. The challenge ahead is now to use the student evaluations and lessons learned from Lisbon to prepare for another successful EWMA UCM course in Helsinki in 2009.

EVALUATION OF EWMA UCM LISBON 2008

EWMA was delighted to see a total of 110 students from teaching institutions in Belgium (Centre of Continuing & Professional Development), Ireland (Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland), Portugal (Universidade Atlântica, ESS Sertihal and Universidade dos Açores), Switzerland (Haute école de Santé, Geneva) and the United Kingdom (University of Hertfordshire) undertake the EWMA UCM in Lisbon 2008.

The students added a unique dimension, contributing positively to the overall success of the conference. Feedback from the students, a central component in the future development of the EWMA UCM, was facilitated through an open forum and the completion of written evaluation forms.

One of the highlights of the feedback includes a strong sense of the importance of being a part of an international group where the opportunity to share different practice experiences is facilitated. The challenges of achieving evidence based practice were also considered an important issue, with the EWMA UCM facilitating open discussion of these challenges. Furthermore, the students were pleased to discover that they were not isolated in seeking the best answers to wound care problems. Indeed that fact that there is much debate on the subject, especially among “experts” was a reassurance.

The overall aims of the programme are to facilitate the student to:

- Identify the process and concepts involved in the conduct of research in wound management
- Increase their understanding of the dissemination of research findings
- Critically appraise the outcomes of research and its applicability in clinical practice
- Identify key priorities in the delivery of wound management services
- Understand the importance of European dimensions and diversity in wound management

CONCLUSION
In the light of the epidemiological, financial and human costs associated with wound management, there is a need for practitioners to have in depth knowledge and skills in the provision of effective, efficient, evidence-based practice for individuals suffering from the most common chronic wounds encountered. The EWMA UCM aims to achieve this by providing a medium where students, from a wide variety of clinical backgrounds and cultural experiences, can come together to hear, confront and debate the latest evidence in wound care. This unique learning experience strengthens the link between theory and practice, facilitating the development of enhanced skills and knowledge in chronic wound management. We look forward to seeing you in Helsinki in May 2009 where you can share in this highly rewarding experience.