ELCOS Portuguese Wound Society - an innovative approach

ELCOS is a scientific society that assembles professionals from different areas (health, education and research) who have a common interest in promoting the discussion, training and research in tissue viability and wound care. Currently, there are 720 members comprising nurses, physicians, physiotherapists, psychologists, nutritionists, and pharmacists. The founders of ELCOS include some co-founders and representatives of counterpart organisations at the national and international levels who intended to embody a project on the national scene: an organisation with the ultimate aim of promoting public health.

This initial group, with multidisciplinary training acquired in Portugal and abroad (in the fields of nursing, chronic wounds, nutrition, psychology, and health facilities management), all with specialised training in community health, launched the project that was anchored along political lines and was clearly defined in its mission, vision and values.

Ambitious but conscious, with policy outlined in its limits, the founding group invited the ELCOS Board and its departments and regional councils comprised of different professionals. All have in common the interest to promote and/or support educational, technical, scientific, ethical and research initiatives in the prevention and treatment of wounds, thus covering clinical practice, teaching and scientific research. Therefore, the human capital of ELCOS consists of professionals at various levels in the scientific community: physicians (specialists in general surgery, vascular, plastic, endocrinology and dermatology), nurses (specialists in various areas), pharmacists, engineers specialising in media applied to the areas of telemedicine and university teachers.

The board members and regional councils consist of a cast with scientific knowledge (with bachelors, masters, and doctorates), ensuring sustained activity in terms of research training, with representation at the level of the EPUAP, EWMA and WHO. To fulfil its goal, the ELCOS-Portuguese Healing Society and the Study and Research Wound Centre are organised geographically into regional councils, aiming to address regional nosology in terms of chronic wounds through the involvement of interested professionals in each region, in partnership with health and education institutions at a local level.

We intend to identify in each region the existing nosology in terms of chronic wounds, the incidence and prevalence, human resources, and knowledge to develop a regional action plan that allows sustained work developed in partnership with institutions to respond in a directed way to the specific problems of each region. In this task to eradicate the disease within the context of poverty in which so many times it appears we follow the words of the General Director of WHO (1983): “Everyone is on and has the power to change things: citizens of the villages and cities, families and communities and all sorts of political and social groups, such as education and research institutions, non-governmental organizations and professional associations. But also health experts and those responsible for the community, such as civil and religious leaders, teachers, judges, workers of social security.”

Without the deep involvement of the entire population, health for all will always be a mirage.

Every year, ELCOS holds an annual Iberian Forum of Ulcers and Wounds in a different city and, this year (2015), the VI Iberian Forum will occur in Lisbon. Furthermore, and following the mission of covering clinical practice, teaching and scientific research in partnership with health and education institutions, we will conduct Post Graduate Courses in Tissue Viability in partnership with universities throughout Portugal and Basic and Advanced Courses in Wound Management in partnership with health institutions.

In 2014, following the agenda led by the International Diabetes Federation and joining the global diabetes community to produce a powerful voice for diabetes awareness and advocacy, we organised the 1st Iberian Symposium in Diabetes, and it was a success with the presence of national and international economists, politicians and health professionals.

By joining ELCOS, members receive a discount at our annual Forum and in so many other activities that we develop. For instance, we have published a Wound Dressing book in 2012, and we are completing another book on debridement that will be launched in March 2015. All publications are free for ELCOS members.