

An evaluation of the EWMA UCM EXPERIENCE 2012

from two Danish students

We are two Danish nurses studying a postgraduate skin integrity course at the University of Hertfordshire, who attended the EWMA University Conference Model (UCM) in Vienna, and we want to share our experiences because we think this year has been an experience of a lifetime. The University Conference Model (UCM) is an innovative approach that combines attendance at a major conference with an accredited academic study. The content and outcomes of the course are matched against sessions and activities on the EWMA conference programme and additional educational activities are planned around the conference programme (Flanagan 2011, Flanagan and Law 2012).

This year the UCM programme at EWMA focused on increasing the networking opportunities between the students from various UCM groups all over Europe participating in the Conference. The group from University of Hertfordshire included 10 clinicians from six different countries. It was a great experience for all of us to get to know and network with different nationalities within the group as well as with other international groups.

The EWMA conference theme this year was: "Wound Healing – Different perspectives, one goal" and approximately 2800 delegates attended. We have both attended a EWMA conference before, but this time we felt more focused and eager to learn and network with the students in the group as well as with other delegates and international students at the conference.

When attending an international conference it is difficult to work out which sessions to go to, but this year we got help from the course leader and principal lecturers from the University. We felt that the use of an international conference pro-

gramme to deliver knowledge in a structured way was a well thought out idea and the EWMA conference was a good choice to deliver the modules "Enhancing Skin Integrity Skills & Treatment" and "Consolidating Specialist Practice". EWMA's International Conference Board members are all experienced practitioners, researchers and authors in the field of wound management and therefore guarantee the quality of learning (EWMA Abstracts Book 2011, 2012).

The conference was intense with a lot of opportunities to attend different oral presentations and free papers, including learning from the poster exhibition and activities in the exhibition hall. There were more than 600 scientific presentations; most were of high quality, and the speakers were experienced and knowledgeable about wound management. Some participants, both speakers and conference delegates, were also experts in wound management and research. It was very interesting to have the opportunity to meet them and discuss best wound practice in their country of origin.

Eight universities had brought UCM students to the conference this year which, for the first time, allowed our tutors to get involved with all of the UCM students who came together to participate in joint activities. Belonging to both the University of Hertfordshire group and the bigger UCM student group during the conference was motivating. When we discussed and reflected critically on the scientific programme and our own clinical practice, we learned so much of value from the tutors, who facilitated teaching and learning activities, and from other international students studying using the UCM approach. In many sessions our assumptions about clinical practice issues were confirmed and if not we gained a new perspective, because belonging to an international group seemed to facilitate learning at a higher level. ►



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Selection of the UCM students, Vienna 2012

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As UCM students, we were provided with an individualised study programme full of international practice development activities such as evaluating the effectiveness of exhibitor's stands at the exhibition and critiquing the posters on display which we did with other UCM students from different European Universities.

The quality of posters varied, but our overall impression was good. Some posters were very clear and those were the ones we preferred. The electronic posters, giving the authors the opportunity to communicate their message in five slides, were introduced this year. These e-posters were of different quality and the one which ultimately won the poster prize was especially good and to the point.

Students also got a choice of free papers to attend as well as satellite symposiums sponsored by the healthcare industry. As novice students in a dynamic learning situation such as the EWMA conference, we found that we were inspired by the skilled professionals around us, who became important role models to us as we listened, watched, learned and reflected. One of the big advantages of the UCM approach at the EWMA conference is that UCM students are recognised as expert practitioners in their own right and have the opportunity to network with key opinion leaders attending the conference.

In the exhibition hall we interviewed a senior marketing manager of a global wound care business about the value of a commercial company attending the conference and explored how being there helped promote business.

During the exhibition activity, planned by our tutors, we were asked to collect and review educational materials given out at the exhibition stands. Some stands used interactive learning and videos whereas others used simple printed information. Our impression was that the health care industry at the conference certainly used its knowledge of how to promote its products and how to catch practitioners' interest in many different ways.

One of the interesting activities planned by our tutors involved interviewing another conference delegate to find out about the health care system in their country. It was really interesting to learn about the health care systems in other European countries and was an eye-opener, because wound care in Europe is managed and organized in many different ways and to different standards! This exercise gave us a fantastic opportunity to become familiar with another health care system and to put our own country's healthcare system into perspective as well as providing a really good networking opportunity.

Conclusion

One of the key things we learned from this year's conference from our supervising tutors was to identify and ask for the evidence used to support exhibitor's products and new approaches to treatment. Our experience from studying at the conference is that industry colleagues are very

interested in providing evidence to support their products. We learned that it is challenging to plan effective RCT-studies and can be difficult to provide quality evidence in wound healing.

We see the UCM approach as a way to educate wound care practitioners studying at a university in a real world setting. UCM students can also facilitate bridge building between industry, clinical practice, research and practitioners in different countries in Europe. It became obvious to us during the conference that practitioners should tell industry colleagues what is needed to help patients with chronic wounds so that they can help find a workable solution and that we should all work together and have common goals for our patients. As UCM students we learned to be more critical of research results, and our tutors taught us to ask for the evidence and to critically appraise studies by reading about the methodology used rather than jumping straight to the study conclusions.

The UCM model is an excellent opportunity for networking nationally and internationally. The schedule of activities was busy resulting in sore feet and the need for early nights. Our advice is to remember to bring a backpack to carry your things and to wear comfortable shoes - a hard learned lesson as being a UCM student at EWMA means being on your feet from early morning to the evening!

Finally, we want to thank the teaching team from the University of Hertfordshire for providing a great, positive teaching and supervision experience as we participated in the University Conference Model; and a big thank you to them for acting on the evaluation of last year's UCM study program to make it even better this year. Next year we won't need to be studying the UCM but would like to come along to see if we can help out and meet old friends. We look forward to meeting a lot of EWMA UCM students in Bella Center, Copenhagen, Denmark in 2013.

Last but not at least, we want to thank Coloplast A/S Denmark for sponsoring our participation as UCM students at the EWMA conferences in 2011 and 2012. Without their support this fantastic opportunity would not have been possible. ■

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THE EWMA UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE MODEL (UCM) in Copenhagen



The EWMA UCM programme offers students of wound management from institutes of higher education across Europe the opportunity to take part of their academic studies whilst participating in the EWMA Conference.

The opportunity of participating in the EWMA UCM is available to all teaching institutions with wound management courses for health professionals.

The UCM programme at the EWMA 2013 Conference in Copenhagen will offer networking opportunities between the students from various UCM groups, UCM Lectures as well as assignments and workshops arranged specifically for the UCM students.

EWMA strongly encourages teaching institutions and students from all countries to benefit from the possibilities of international networking and access to lectures by many of the most experienced wound management experts in the world.

Yours sincerely

Zena Moore,
 Chair of the Education Committee, Immediate Past President

Participating institutions:

 Donau Universität Krems Austria	 Escola Superior de Enfermagem de Lisboa Portugal	
 Haute École Spécialisée de Suisse occidentale Geneva, Switzerland	 HUB Brussels Belgium	 KATHO university college Roeselare Belgium
 Lithuanian University of Health Sciences Lithuania	 Metropolitan University College Denmark	
 University of Hertfordshire United Kingdom	 Universidade Católica Portuguesa Porto, Portugal	

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