

# “How do you measure a year?”



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Since I live in New York City, I am often able to take advantage of the wonderful theatre available on and off Broadway. In the show, *Rent*, there is one song with a particular sentence that sticks in my mind at this time – “How do you measure a year?” The obvious answer they give is 365 days, the time it takes for our planet to circle around the sun. But since we are human beings and not heavenly bodies, our personal response may be quite different, regardless of which number of the year is ending since, depending on where in the world we live, we may be following different calendars that label this year with very different numbers.

Do we measure this year by the number of natural disasters? If we start counting, the number of places that have had earthquakes this year (Japan, Turkey, Chile, Oklahoma, USA, and yes, even the rarest of places, New York City, to name a few), is that how to define this past year? Are the killing waves of the tsunami that engulfed parts of Japan and spread out to reach the western shores of North and South America a way to measure the inter-connectedness of us as global inhabitants? Or do we measure it by the people affected by typhoons, hurricanes or other storms that bring the rain? Is the depth of the flood waters, for example in Thailand, the way to gauge the year? Fortunately, our APETNA colleagues inform us that the location for their December 2011 congress is located away from the floods and thus safe to proceed for their congress in Bangkok. Perhaps it is the number of tornadoes? Here in the USA, the town of Joplin, Missouri, suffered devastating losses including the destruction of the hospital. I for one will not forget getting the scary experience of driving to their sister hospital in Springfield, Missouri, two days after that tornado and coming face to face with another tornado. As luck would have it, the highway exit came up at just the right time and I was able to get off the road in time to run into shelter in a fast food restaurant. Where else was the safest place for an ostomy and wound nurse to ‘ride’ out the storm but in the bathroom? It seems that in most buildings, it is usually an inner room without windows and holding onto the fixtures is a good survival technique.

On a global level, do we measure the year by the way the people in Haiti, New Orleans, or Japan have rebuilt their communities and have returned to their usual way of life? Maybe it is the way our patients rebuild their lives after ostomy surgery. Perhaps it is counting the days till their

temporary ostomy is closed or the number of days that their pouch and skin barrier remain intact? As ostomy nurses, do we count the number of our patients who do not get skin problems in our care or the number of days to heal their peristomal skin problems? Or is it measured by the number of incontinent episodes that a person experiences as we help them cope with their skin and continence needs? Maybe it is measured by the centimetres or inches in wound reduction or the number of wounds prevented or healed? For many of us in this tri-speciality, the answer may be all of the above!

Perhaps we measure the year by another successful congress? This October, some WCET board members were able to attend the outstanding WCET UK congress in Liverpool, UK. This was a wonderful opportunity for them to meet with board members from WCET UK to discuss issues that are important to both organisations. I even joined in the dialogue with them via a Skype call during their meeting to discuss the journal. I am very happy to announce that beginning in 2012, Jo Sica, from WCET UK, will have a dedicated space in the *WCET Journal* to share information and items that are impacting on ET nurse practice in the UK.

Or do we measure the year by the fact that one of Liverpool’s most famous sons, the Beatle John Lennon, would have been 70 years old in October had he not met a disastrous end in New York City at such a young age? Or do we measure the year by the death of Steve Jobs, whose passing at 56 years of age reminds us of just how he and his company changed the world by partnering the art and the science of technology. Just think how our personal lives and our practice have been enriched by his determination.

I know it is the end of the year, when the index of articles arrives from Eva Carlsson from Sweden. You will find it in this issue of the *WCET Journal* along with a great selection of articles and features. Whether it be the “Stories from the bedside” by Marie Ocampo about the care of a patient’s haematoma from an injection or the second visual guide to chronic wounds commonly seen in practice by Kahane and colleagues, or the one provided by Dr Lyder an evidence table of studies regarding heel pressure ulcers as well as some practical information about preventing heel pressure ulcers, the manuscripts will be informative. Follow along with the selected abstracts on negative pressure wound therapy from the 2010 WOCN/WCET Joint Congress in Phoenix compiled by Dr Karen Zulkowski and “Ethical ET” by Julia Thompson on “Truth-telling ... even when the news is bad”. I hope you look forward to reading the WCET wound rounds feature in this issue as well.

Please take the time to read the statements from the candidates who are running for the WCET Board of Directors in 2012. Elections will take place at the WCET business meeting in Adelaide. Speaking about Adelaide, once again our Congress Liaison, Elizabeth English, has provided us with another rendition of “Countdown to Congress”. I’m counting the days till we meet at the 19th WCET Biennial Congress in Adelaide Australia, 19–23 April 2012.

