



The Value of Enterostomal Therapists

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Aging population and socio-economic changes in modern society has lead to a growth in patient population who requires stomal surgeries. Patients with ostomies (Ostomates) are not only experiencing a physiological loss in function, but also having a huge psychological trauma. Interventions provided by certified Enterostomal Therapists (ET) during the pre-operative and post-operative phases has been shown in various literatures that they improve the surgical outcomes, rehabilitation process and quality of life of the patients.



On the other hand, aging population also implies a further demand in healthcare services for those with chronic health problems, such as diabetic mellitus,

cancer and incontinence. Such conditions can subsequently lead to chronic wounds, which required dedicated care from ETs. However, in some emerging countries such as China, there is a large gap between demand and provision of professional ET nursing services. For instance, there is an annual increase of 200 ostomates in Wenzhou. However, only 20 ETs are practising in the whole Zhejiang Province. Therefore, there is an urgency to provide more ET education so that professional ET nursing can be extended to areas where the service was previously non-existent.



In 2009, the Wenzhou Academy of Nursing and I had founded the Wenzhou School of Enterostomal Therapists. This was the fifth school in China to provide recognized ET Nursing Educational Programme (ETNEP). It plays a crucial role in relieving the tension for ET nursing services in the community. In the year

2009 – 2010, a total of 28 nationally recruited ET students had graduated from the school.



After graduation, they all continued to participate actively in their own institutions to provide quality ET services, for examples:

Ms. Li from Hunan Province is now appointed as a full-time Nursing Specialist in ET practice. She leads a wound care team of five staff nurses to operate a wound care clinic. The clinic runs six days every week to serve 1800 outpatients and provide more than 630 in-hospital consultation services a year. Among these patients, 70% of them require wound care, 25% of them need follow-up after stomal surgeries and the remaining 5% are patients with incontinence problems.

Ms. Peng of Shandong Province is appointed as the vice-chairman of the Wound and Stoma Care Committee of the Qingdao College of Nursing. She has established a wound and stoma care team in her hospital, which conducts in-service training to her colleagues and provides consultation service for difficult-to-manage cases.

Ms. Zhuge from Wenzhou and her team members have launched a community awareness campaign named “Love the skin, improve the quality of life” for members of elderly homes. She has also conducted a study on quality of life of ostomates.

Although these examples can only illustrate individual achievement of some of the ETNEP graduates, we can see that the outcome of structured ET nursing education can be very encouraging. The positive attitude of the graduates and their contribution serve as a momentum to drive the sustainability of ET nursing in China. As the founder of the Wenzhou ET School, I am very proud of them.

Ms. Aihua Chen is the pioneer of the Wenzhou ET nursing school. She was awarded the Congress Travel Scholarship by the Norma N. Gill Foundation to attend the WOCN / WCET Joint Congress held in Phoenix, USA in 2010.

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