

SCRIPT – PRINT - Wound Care Closer to Home Clinics in Rural Areas Address a Growing Need

In the United States, chronic wounds affect 6.5 million people, and that number is likely to increase as patients live longer with more chronic medical conditions, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

When wound care patients need intensive treatment, the usual response is to transport them to the nearest hospital or specialty clinic. But in rural areas of the country, a simple trip to the hospital may not be that simple, especially for elderly patients. Traveling long distances, access to transportation, and relying on family members and friends for help all play a role in getting the best possible care.

To help patients heal and stay close to home for their care, OSF HealthCare has recently opened wound care clinics in Mendota, Ottawa, and Streator along the I-80 corridor.

“We were referring a lot of our patients off to different towns in surrounding communities for wound care, and when you’re in a rural setting, just driving down the road 30 miles can be burdens,” said Stacy Piller, Advanced Practice Nurse, OSF HealthCare. “We don’t have the transportation services that people in more urban areas have. So we wanted to bring that care closer to home.”

According to Piller, 75 percent of wounds happen to people who are over 65 years old. And one in four diabetic patients will have a wound in their lifetime.

“When we talk about our vulnerable populations, we talk the elderly, diabetic, patients with chronic heart disease, chronic lung disease, and patients with dementia,” said Stacy Piller, Advanced Practice Nurse, OSF HealthCare. “I travel to nursing homes and patients with dementia from wounds are at a far greater rate than your healthy elderly. COPD, patients who have strokes, young and old, and your obese patients – anyone whose mobility is limited is at risk for a wound. Those are the people who really are the neediest in our population. They’re at risk for the worst outcomes and they need our care.”

The team of wound care specialists, doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals use the latest, most advanced treatments. Together, they work with each patient to determine the type, location, severity, and cause of the wound. And they work with each patient to overcome any stigmas they may be experiencing.

“Patients are embarrassed by wounds. They don’t want to bring them to attention,” said Stacy Piller, Advanced Practice Nurse, OSF HealthCare. “They’ll let them fester for a long time before they tell you. There is a social or emotional embarrassment that comes with wounds. Often, wounds don’t happen to healthy people. They happen to elderly who have chronic medical

problems who are debilitated and frail. So those people need help and they don't always want to ask for help."

The goal is for patients to experience timely healing so that they can get back on their feet. A five-year study by Medscape shows that nearly 67 percent of wounds treated in wound care centers across the country were healed by the patients' final visit.

More information on the OSF HealthCare wound centers, can be found [here](#).