

Market Insights: Italy - Chronic Wounds & COVID 19



Authors: Giuseppe Mancullo & Andrew Adams

Giuseppe Mancullo has more than 28 years business experience in the Medical Devices arena. He developed his carrier within Smith and Nephew Italy managing various departments.

Andrew Adams, Managing Director of Wound Market Consulting has over 30 years' international experience in the wound care industry.



IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITY - COVID-19 in Italy has had a major impact on the care of patients with chronic wounds.

The hospital system switched resources from other specialities to focus maximum effort on the acute phase of COVID-19 disease and save lives. Outpatient wound care was suspended. Patients with chronic wounds had to fall back on the family doctor, home care, private nursing services and self-care, all within the constraints of quarantine and social distancing. It is no surprise that, despite the best efforts of caregivers, in many cases patients' wounds got worse.

Most specialist wound clinics in Italy are co-located in hospitals. The suspension of access meant for no recourse to specialist diagnosis and care, with the consequent lack of well-designed integrated care plans and reduction in standard of care.

Patients had to replace the 'free at the point of delivery' care of the health system with privately paid care, entailing not only cost some could ill afford but interruption to consistent medical record keeping of their wound care.

Italy is fortunate in having a patients' association for those with skin ulcers – SIMITU. SIMITU launched its own support programme providing web-based medical advice from wound care professionals to patients and generalist health professionals. Requests and questions came in from the whole of Italy, demonstrating the national dimension of the crisis in wound care.

How has industry responded to this challenge? What does this mean for the future?

The significance of the generalist and lay audience for the wound care industry changed overnight. Suddenly communication programmes had to migrate exclusively to online, had to address fundamental questions of good wound care and had to be in language and formats very easily accessible to the non-specialist.

The emphasis on the simplicity and ease of use of products will grow. Self-care by the patient or by a family member will have to be given even greater prominence in consideration of product design.

The nimble innovator will look for opportunities in combining value-added services such as home care, training, case management and clinical wound care, with the delivery of products. We may see such "full service" businesses being paid by results; the number of wounds healed or number of "ulcer-free days". Far greater account has to be taken both by industry and the health system of the alignment of different care settings in order to deliver an integrated wound care plan.

For Further Insights into the changing environment in wound care in Italy, contact us today.