

Lowering the Barriers: Drop-in Wound Care Services in Downtown Vancouver

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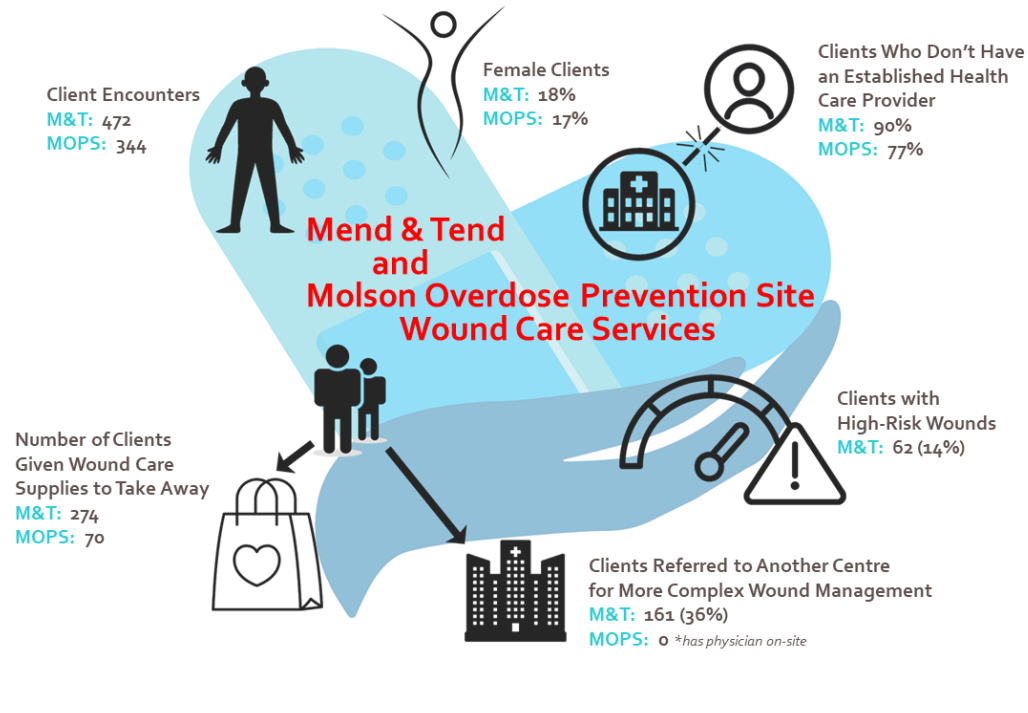


Background: Unsheltered people with wounds face many barriers to accessing care:

- Set appointment times may not work for this patient population
- Many describe a history of receiving stigmatizing care and distrust in the healthcare system
- Untreated wounds can become chronic and complex, negatively impacting quality of life

Providence Health Care and Vancouver Coastal Health developed drop-in community wound care services in the downtown eastside (DTES) of Vancouver to provide treatment for simple wounds in locations where people already congregate, and to work to link clients to follow-up care to established clinics when possible. Both services utilize a team model, composed of RNs, LPNs, and Peer Support Workers.

Results: See infographic



"By providing low-barrier wound care services ... we not only offer immediate, compassionate medical attention but also a gateway to broader health & mental health services."
Mend & Tend Provider

"Flexibility is necessary for clients navigating the chaos of trying to meet their basic needs."
Mend & Tend Provider

"Thanks for taking your time to take care of the community, and all the people here."
Mend & Tend Client

Discussion: Data collected from two downtown Vancouver hospitals showed a combined average of 41 patient visits per day to the Emergency Departments for wound care, at an annual cost of \$14.5 million. Forty percent of the people seeking care for wounds are linked to the DTES, at a cost of \$5.8 million. The projected savings by providing care in the community where these clients live is estimated at \$2.2 million annually and has the potential to free up hospital beds and redirect people from our local emergency departments.

Lowering the barriers to wound care:

- Improves patient outcomes
- Helps avoid emergency department visits, prolonged hospitalizations and amputations
- May increase trust in the health care system, supporting client connections to primary care.

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