



Barbara Petersen RN, WCC, OMS, DWC

Turning Tragedy Into Purpose Through Education and Mentorship

Everyone knows the saying, *"When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."* For Barbara Petersen, this has been more than a phrase—it has been a way of life. She has taken both triumphs and tragedies and turned them into opportunities to teach, to mentor, and to improve wound care for countless others.

Barbara dedicated more than 40 years to nursing, retiring from Adventist Health in Hanford, CA after a career defined by service, compassion, and education. A WCC since 2008, Barbara later earned her OMS and DWC certifications, expanding her expertise in advanced wound and ostomy care. Remarkably, she retired exactly 41 years to the day she began her career, yet even in retirement, she continues to share her knowledge and passion for wound care as an educator.

Her journey began in Med-Surg, but when her hospital expanded and she found herself working more behind a desk, Barbara knew she was meant for something different. She approached her managers about pursuing wound care, and they gave her the opportunity. Though some physicians were initially skeptical of her knowledge, Barbara earned their trust by consistently demonstrating her expertise. Over time, she became the go-to wound care resource for her entire facility.

Recognizing the knowledge gap in wound care among new nurses, Barbara began teaching small wound care classes within her hospital. What started with just a few colleagues quickly grew into something much larger—she went on to train more than 500 nurses across multiple facilities. Barbara also extended her teaching to residents, helping them learn essential wound care practices not always covered in the classroom. Her passion for education and mentorship earned her the DAISY Award for Leadership, an honor reflecting her influence not just on patients, but on the hundreds of clinicians who learned from her. Barbara often told her students, *"Once you're my student, you'll always be my student."*

Barbara's commitment to education and helping others continued even during the most difficult moments of her life. After the tragic loss of her daughter to a post-surgical infection,

Barbara chose to honor her memory through generosity. Though she could not attend the inaugural HEAL Conference, she donated her registration fee so another clinician could benefit. At the same time, NAWCO had been contacted by two residents who wanted to attend but could not afford registration. Barbara sponsored one of them, and NAWCO matched her donation for the other—both in honor of her daughter. Even in her grief, Barbara found a way to give back and support the next generation of wound care professionals.

Throughout her career and into retirement, Barbara Petersen has embodied resilience, leadership, and compassion. She has left an enduring legacy through the patients she healed, the clinicians she mentored, and the generosity she showed in times of hardship.

Please join NAWCO in celebrating Barbara Petersen as this month's Outstanding Clinician. We are honored to count her among our credential holders and grateful for her immeasurable impact on the wound care community.

If you know other NAWCO certified clinicians, we would love to hear about it! Click the following link to share their story. <https://www.nawccb.org/excellence-in-wound-care-nominees>