

OUR NURSING CARE: DIVERSITY IN ACTION

For every RDNS nurse, no day is the same. Different clients, different living environments, different conditions provide wonder, challenge and great reward. But within the vast array of care provided by our nurses, some staff have pursued a specific field of expertise. Some chose their field by design, others arrived almost by accident; all are single-minded in their dedication.



JANIE – WOUND CARE

For one so diminutive in physical stature, Janie Beckhouse possesses a ferocious tenacity when it comes to the battle against her clients' wounds. She speaks bluntly about being intolerant of persistent leg ulcers that won't heal and makes no apology for untiringly pursuing a 100% success rate. It's not possible of course, not yet at least, but that doesn't prevent this veteran of RDNS from signing up with a daily dose of passion in her battle against one of the most common ailments affecting RDNS' clients.

Janie explains that wound care has taken off as a speciality in the last 15 years and the progress made in terms of treatments and technology have resulted in greatly increased recovery rates.

As a young nurse looking to make a difference, she wanted to work in psychiatric care. She felt that this would help her to look after the 'whole person'. But it quickly became evident after a short time that RDNS would fulfil her need to care for clients holistically. That was over 20 years ago and although she started life at RDNS as a general field nurse, she realised over time that many of her clients, regardless of their primary diagnosis, were suffering wounds of one sort or another. A natural student and seeker of knowledge, Janie set out on a quest to educate herself about wound care and within a short period, equipped with new learning and understanding, the opportunity arose for her to become a Clinical Nurse Consultant in wound care. It was a daunting moment but she grasped the opportunity and since then has made wound care her vocation and her passion.

She spends a large part of her working life in the wound clinic at RDNS' Rosebud site. Unlike the majority of RDNS' work, which see nurses visiting clients in their own homes, the clinic allows clients to visit Janie at a scheduled time. Most of the clinic's clients are receiving treatment for leg ulcers and there is a large degree of follow-up consultation for clients who have already achieved good results. She also acts as a consultant to other local healthcare providers, particularly local doctors, who refer their own patients for Janie's expert assessment and treatment. The care she tailors for clients requires careful consideration of all of the factors that can affect healing: their lifestyle, general health, medical history, nutrition. And the state of their circulation. Blood circulation, Janie explains earnestly, is a key factor in the healing of wounds.

Outside of the clinic, Janie spends considerable time informing other health service providers about RDNS' particular expertise in wound care. It leads to a more holistic model of healthcare, she explains, and promotes good collaboration and working relationships across the Mornington Peninsula, where she is based.

The rewards come thick and fast from this type of work, she enthuses. She recalls with obvious pleasure an early client who was suffering such a terrible plight with leg ulcers that she had almost become a recluse. So bad was her affliction that she would not see her family or even venture out shopping. Within three months of meeting Janie, her wounds were healed and she was on a plane for an extended family holiday. It was a pivotal moment in Janie's career and secured her commitment to this highly specialised vocation.

She loves the fact that progress in wound care is obvious and demonstrable.

Clients can witness their ulcers healing, their pain reducing and their suffering retreating. It is the most satisfying aspect of what Janie does and bolsters her determination, especially on those days when certain wounds seem particularly resistant to her intervention. With a wry smile, Janie recalls that she fell into her job almost by default, her early sights set on psychiatric nursing. The look on her face as she recalls her many years as a wound specialist confirms the fact that, despite her tentative start, she is well-satisfied with the path that she took. And one gets the impression that, for all of the healing that she has helped achieve for clients on the outside, there has been plenty of inner healing as well.