



Wound  
Ostomy and  
Continence  
Nurses  
Society®



## **Position Statement WOCN® Registered Trademark Use Guidelines**

### **Originated By:**

Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ (“Society”) and the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (“Certification Board”)

### **Date Completed:**

December 2011

### **Statement of Position:**

WOCN® is a registered trademark owned by the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™, which has the exclusive rights to use the Mark in association with the name of its professional organization and in commerce related to its services. The WOCN® Mark is not to be used by individuals or groups as a name, title, or credential for an individual or as an abbreviation for wound, ostomy and continence nurses/nursing. WOCN® is pronounced by stating each of the letters individually instead of pronouncing the letters as if they were a single word (McNichol, 2004). This also applies to the acronym that refers to the Journal of Wound Ostomy and Continence Nursing (*JWOCN*).

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this position statement is to educate Society members, Certification Board certificants and candidates, specialty nurses, industry partners, and other stakeholders about the proper use of the WOCN® Mark in order to:

1. Protect the integrity of the WOCN® Mark as a registered trademark for the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ and its services.
2. Prevent use of WOCN® as a professional credential or job title.
3. Avoid use of the WOCN® Mark in any manner that creates an impression of sponsorship, endorsement, affiliation or approval of an activity, program, presentation, or publication by the Society when such a relationship does not exist.
4. Avoid confusion among stakeholders regarding the activities of the Society versus individual members or nurses.

5. Avoid use of the *Society's* registered trademark in any manner that would indicate or create an impression that such term denotes certification, qualification or a credential of any individual or entity.
6. Avoid use of the *Certification Board's* Marks in such a manner to indicate or create an impression that such term denotes certification, qualification or a credential of any individual or entity who is not currently certified.

## **History:**

**Issues/Problems.** Appropriate use of titles, licensure designation, credentials, and specialty designations has legal and ethical implications and has been an ongoing area of concern for the Society and the Certification Board.

Both the Society and the Certification Board rigorously protect their respective trademarks. The Certification Board, which owns registered trademarks that include “WOCN” within the registered trademarks denoting individual certifications, has entered into a formal agreement with the Society whereby each agrees to the continued co-existence and registration of the other’s respective marks.

Improper use of titles can be misleading. Whether intentional or unintentional, it is improper to represent oneself as having qualifications, experience/background, certifications, competencies, etc., that one has not attained. The Society has the right and obligation to protect the organization from the use of its name, brand, or logo in any manner that might cause harm.

Situations have occurred where individuals have placed “WOCN” after their names in publications, advertisements, grant applications, and public presentations. Also, some Society members improperly refer to themselves as “WOCNs” and some properly certified individuals improperly use “WOCN” after their names instead of the credential “CWOCN” or other appropriate credential awarded by the Certification Board. Using “WOCN” after a name may be misinterpreted by employers, patients, and other stakeholders, and could cause harm to the Society, its reputation, or the WOC nursing specialty. Programs also have been advertised improperly as “WOCN conferences” that were not sponsored or endorsed by the Society.

Whether intentional or not, those situations create confusion, falsely imply an affiliation with the Society, misrepresent the certification status of individuals, and infringe on the registered trademarks of the Society and the Certification Board.

## **Supportive Statements:**

**WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society.** An editorial, written by then President, Laurie McNichol, was published in the *WOCNews* regarding the appropriate use of the WOCN acronym, and the confusion caused when it was used inappropriately (McNichol, 2004). Later, a President’s Message, by then Southeast Region President, Susan Steele, was published in the *Southeast Region News* regarding the complications caused by inappropriate use of the WOCN acronym (Steele, 2006).

**American Nurses Association (ANA).** The ANA position statement about the order of credentials for professional nurses specifies that nurses should only list after their names credentials that were issued by a nationally recognized body accredited to do so (ANA, 2009). Credentials designate levels of education, licensure, certification, and professional achievement. According to the ANA, listing of credentials by nurses communicates credibility and competence to colleagues and consumers of nursing care. ANA recommends that nurses use only accepted credentials and a standardized order of listing credentials after their names, to ensure consistency and professionalism across nursing settings. The following is the recommended order of credentials/designations:

- Education (highest earned degree first)
- License (designation required by the state)
- National certification
- Awards and honors
- Other certifications

ANA specifies that *national certifications* are those awarded by nationally recognized and accredited certifying bodies and include recognition of continued education in a specified area of practice or professional achievement such as CWOCN<sup>®</sup>, CWCN<sup>®</sup>, COCN<sup>®</sup>, CCCN<sup>®</sup>, etc. Therefore, nurses should only use credentials after their names that are officially awarded/approved by recognized organizations. Credentials should be listed as capital letters without periods between the letters, but with a comma between each credential. Following are examples of the correct order of credentials:

- N. Nurse, MSN, RN, APRN, CWOCN
- N. Nurse, PhD, RN, APRN, CWCN, FAAN
- N. Nurse, BSN, RN, CWON
- N. Nurse, BS, RN, CCCN

In 2010, the WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society's Board of Directors adopted the recommendations from the ANA for the order of credentials for all Society publications. Members were notified of this action in the President's Letter in the fall issue of the *WOCNews* (Bonham, 2010).

**Certification.** Certification by the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board (WOCNCB<sup>®</sup>) is voluntary. Nurses who hold WOCNCB<sup>®</sup> credentials have demonstrated their commitment to and competency in wound, ostomy and/or continence (WOC) nursing practice by meeting stringent, predetermined standards and passing a rigorous, comprehensive wound, ostomy and/or continence examination(s) (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008). Credentialing provides formal recognition of a commitment to high standards in wound, ostomy and continence nursing. Certification provides formal recognition of knowledge as a wound, ostomy and/or continence care nurse beyond that gained from traditional nursing education programs.

The Certification Board stands firmly in its belief that WOC nursing certification improves the level and quality of patient care by defining and maintaining competency within the WOC nursing specialties.

**WOCNCB<sup>®</sup> Credentials.** Appropriate credentials are registered trademarks and are awarded based on meeting specific eligibility criteria and completion of required examination(s) for initial certification or completion of an examination(s) or a professional growth portfolio for recertification every 5 years. The registered/trademarked WOCNCB<sup>®</sup> credentials include the following (WOCN-WOCNCB, 2008; WOCNCB, 2010, 2011):

<b>CWOCN<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse
<b>CWCN<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Wound Care Nurse
<b>COCN<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Ostomy Care Nurse
<b>CCCN<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Continence Care Nurse
<b>CWON<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse
<b>CFCN<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Foot Care Nurse
<b>CWOCN-AP<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Continence Nurse, Advanced Practice
<b>CWON-AP<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Wound Ostomy Nurse, Advanced Practice
<b>CWCN-AP<sup>®</sup></b>	Certified Wound Care Nurse, Advanced Practice
<b>COCN-AP<sup>SM</sup></b>	Certified Ostomy Care Nurse Advanced Practice
<b>CCCN-AP<sup>SM</sup></b>	Certified Continence Care Nurse, Advanced Practice

### **Conclusions:**

The WOCN<sup>®</sup> Mark is the registered, trademarked acronym for the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society<sup>™</sup> and its services. The WOCN<sup>®</sup> Mark is not to be used by an individual or group as a title or credential or as an abbreviation for wound, ostomy and continence nurses/nursing. Registered, trademarked Certification Board credentials should not be used in an abbreviated or incomplete form after a provider's name as a title (i.e., without the preceding "C" such as WOCN, WCN, CCN etc). Proper identification (e.g., branding) is important to protect the image and credibility of the individual WOC specialty nurse and overall specialty practice, the Society and the Certification Board.

### **Recommendations:**

**Practice.** All wound, ostomy and/or continence nurses will ensure the correct use of the acronyms/credentials/titles within their practice, publications, educational activities, job descriptions, and public relations venues. Certified WOC nurse specialists should use the registered, trademarked credentials after their name only as awarded by the Certification Board.

**Education.** WOCN<sup>®</sup>-accredited educational program (WOCNEP) directors will include proper use of acronyms/credentials/titles in the didactic content related to role or professional development.

**Research/Publications.** The Center for Clinical Investigation (CCI) director and the CCI Advisory Board will ensure appropriate use of the WOCN<sup>®</sup> Mark, credentials, and titles when reviewing documents, grant applications, and publications. The *JWOCN* editor and other editors of Society documents will ensure the appropriate use of credentials and the WOCN<sup>®</sup> Mark in all publications.

**Trademark Use Guidelines.** The WOCN<sup>®</sup> Mark should be displayed in a consistent fashion and in the same way every time it is displayed. The WOCN<sup>®</sup> Mark should only be used as an adjective along with the descriptive name and never as a substitute for products or services. Because Marks are not nouns, they should not be used in a plural or possessive manner (Stegink, 2010). Proper and improper uses of the Mark include the following examples:

- **Proper use:**

- Join us for the annual WOCN<sup>®</sup> Conference or the WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society Conference
- Read the WOCN<sup>®</sup> Newsletter or the WOCN<sup>®</sup> Society Newsletter
- WOCN<sup>®</sup> Accredited Nursing Education Programs
- WOCN<sup>®</sup> Education Program

- **Improper use:**

- N. Nurse, BSN, RN, WOCN
- WOCNS, WOCN'S, WOCNS'
- WOCNs, WOCN's, WOCNs'
- A group of WOCNs met last week
- A WOCN saw the patient
- I am a WOCN
- We are WOCNs
- WOCN's Program
- WOCN Education Programs
- Job description that specifies candidate must be a WOCN

**Glossary:**

**WOCN<sup>®</sup>:** Registered trademark of the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™ for its organization and its services.

**WOCNCB<sup>®</sup>:** Registered trademark of the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board and its services.

**Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society™:** A professional nursing society that supports its members to advance the practice and guide the delivery of expert health care to individuals with wounds, ostomies and incontinence.

**Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing Certification Board:** A professional organization dedicated to promoting the highest standard of consumer care and safety by providing credentialing in the areas of wound, ostomy and continence nursing.

**References:**

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- Bonham, P.A. (2010). President's letter: Harvest time, *WOCNews IV*, Fall, 2-4.
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- Stegink, L. (2010). Trademark Use Guidelines, Chicago Law Partners, LLC, Chicago, Ill.
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