

# The Continuum of Care: Demonstrating Positive Outcomes Through the Hollister Secure Start Program

Connie Kelly, RN, APN/CNS, CWON  
Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Keith Piccolo, RN, BSN, WOCN  
St. Joseph's Home Health Agency, Orange County, California, USA

Thom Nichols, MS, MBA  
Hollister Incorporated, Libertyville, Illinois, USA

## Statement of Problem

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With shorter stays and stresses associated with hospitalization and surgery, it is not surprising that people with ostomies experience physical and psychological difficulties upon discharge from the hospital. Even if referred to home care, many ostomy patients initially lack basic skills and knowledge necessary to care for their ostomy, which can impact their quality of life. Effective rehabilitation requires support beyond short-term needs after discharge.

## Overview

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Recent changes in health care have resulted in fragmentation of care. Shorter hospital stays, fewer outpatient stoma clinics, reimbursement issues, fewer WOC Nurses in home care, and decreases in pre-op visits are contributing factors. Collaboration and referral to the Hollister **Secure Start** Program can help to ensure continuity of care, improve outcomes, and enhance patient satisfaction. WOC Nurses have experienced this first hand.

## The Clinician Perspective of the Secure Start Program

*"I have felt privileged in helping many people adjust to their new life with an ostomy. Seeing people withstand many physical challenges with grace and dignity is very humbling."*

*"But when reflecting, the challenging parts of WOC Nursing quickly come to the surface. How can I get the patient-specific supplies in a timely manner? Who can be there for specific questions about activities, travel, insurance, etc.? The Secure Start Program has been developed to help me answer these questions and many more. This program has become an integral part of my busy practice."*

*"Any acute care WOC Nurse will agree that it is a huge challenge to teach patients while they are in the hospital. Between the pain medicines, diagnosis, short stays, and the hospital environment in general, it is very difficult to learn new skills. The Secure Start Program provides education in varying formats to supplement information received in the hospital. It does not replace the education I provide; it adds to it."*

*"Once the patient is home, every WOC Nurse would be willing to have multiple phone conversations to make sure*

*the transition from hospital to home is going smoothly. The unfortunate reality is that the demands within the hospital environment usually prevent this from happening. With the Secure Start Program, each patient is given a specific coordinator's name and number to call with any questions. This well-educated person is able to address the patient's routine issues, while understanding full well when the patient needs to be referred back to the WOC Nurse."*

**Connie Kelly, RN, APN/CNS, CWON**

*"Being the only WOC Nurse in a large home health agency, I often find my responsibilities stretched further than what I can humanly accomplish."*

*"Unfortunately, what falls as a low priority on my list may very well be the most pressing need of a new ostomy patient: Can I get into the shower? How full can my pouch get before I need to empty it? Having the Secure Start Program in place is not only reassuring for the patient, but also a tremendous time saver for my practice."*

*"Those first few weeks home can be very challenging for the patient, family, and home health nurse. With changes in stoma size and shape, increased ambulation, and dietary intake, oftentimes the pouch that was working so well in the hospital is no longer getting the job done. The Secure Start Program is there to provide product samples and address routine patient issues. As the patients resume "normal" life with their new challenges, the Secure Start Program provides assistance with finding a network of providers for their supplies. This is a job that I could not possibly have the time or resources to commit to."*

*"When people ask me why I use the Secure Start Program, the answer is quite simple: I could not practice in my current capacity without it. This program is a valued tool that allows me as a clinician to better focus my skills where they are needed most, while providing the support I need to achieve positive patient outcomes."*

**Keith Piccolo, RN, BSN, WOCN**

Recently, implementation of the Secure Start Program resulted in changes in clinical practice in both acute and home care settings. In addition to receiving product samples, patients had access to a Secure Start Specialist who was able to educate them on reimbursement options, and answer ostomy-related product and lifestyle questions. This type of program reinforces the education started by the WOC Nurse and provides patients with needed information beyond clinical expertise.

In addition to experiential results, a random survey assessing the program benefits was implemented to evaluate the experiences of patients (n = 347) who had gone through, or were currently in the Secure Start Program. The survey was analyzed for content validity and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.84).

The data significantly demonstrated that planned follow-up and assistance after discharge was highly valued, and aided in the adjustment to having a stoma. Eighty-seven percent said the program performed a valuable service in adjusting to life with a stoma, and 98 percent stated they were glad their nurse enrolled them in the program. See Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1:** Are you glad your nurse enrolled you in the Secure Start Program?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	323	98.48
No	5	1.52

**Table 2:** In your opinion, did the Secure Start Specialist perform a valuable service in helping you adapt to your stoma?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, a very valuable service	174	51.18
Yes, a valuable service	122	35.88
Not necessarily a valuable service	32	9.41
No	12	3.53

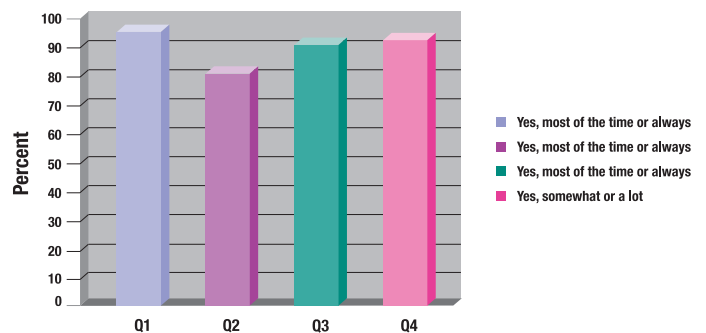
The survey respondents also indicated that the Secure Start Program was instrumental in helping them find a pouching system that was right for them.

**Table 3:** Are you satisfied that the Secure Start Specialist helped you find a pouching system that was right for you?

	Frequency	Percent
Very satisfied	189	55.92
Satisfied	106	31.36
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	34	10.06
Dissatisfied	6	1.78
Very dissatisfied	3	0.89

An attribute of the Secure Start Program is that the patient, when enrolled, is assigned a personal program representative to assist in their transition to living with a stoma. Graph 1, shown below, presents some of the patient experiences with this.

- Question 1:** Was the Secure Start Specialist someone you could count on to understand your ostomy product needs?
- Question 2:** Was the Secure Start Specialist someone to turn to for suggestions about how to adjust to your life with an ostomy?
- Question 3:** Was the Secure Start Specialist someone whose assistance you really valued?
- Question 4:** Did the Secure Start Specialist help you understand the product ordering process?



**Graph 1:** Patient perspective of their experience with the Secure Start Specialist. The graph represents those with a satisfactory experience.

### Conclusion

Data supports that patients benefit when collaboration is a part of their plan following ostomy surgery. This comes from a strong support system that includes the WOC Nurse, family, and the Hollister Secure Start Program.

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**1.888.740.8999**

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