



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 17 October, 2017

Man who narrowly avoided amputation after a wound became infected calls for Australians to 'Be Wound Aware'

Melbourne resident John Cocomello is calling for Australians to recognise the serious risk of chronic wounds during Wound Awareness Week, after he nearly lost his leg when a scratch became infected.

Running from 16 to 20 October, Wound Awareness Week is drawing attention to Australia's 'hidden affliction' of chronic wounds, which are wounds that won't heal or recur. Nearly half a million Australians a day suffer chronic wounds, costing the health system around \$3 billion each year. The number of sufferers is expected to soar due to Australia's aging population, as older people 65+ are most at risk.

People with diabetes, such as Mr Cocomello, are also at high risk of developing chronic wounds. This is because diabetes can cause poor circulation and nerve damage particularly in the feet.

"Don't do what I did - I learnt the hard way," warns Mr Cocomello.

When Mr Cocomello spotted a small scratch on his foot, around two years ago, he just assumed it would heal on its own. "It was only the size of a shirt button," he recalled.

But within only a matter of days the scratch became infected and turned gangrenous. Mr Cocomello ended up in hospital, with doctors struggling to treat the rapidly spreading infection in his foot. They eventually gave him a chilling ultimatum:

"They gave me two choices - it's either life or limb," said Mr Cocomello.

Thankfully, they managed to save Mr Cocomello's leg. He spent over five weeks in hospital, had to wear a vacuum dressing for months, and needed a skin graft.

After his own experience, Mr Cocomello is calling for Australians to recognise the risks and learn the 'Warning Signs of Wounds' during Wound Awareness Week - and don't delay treatment.

"If you've got diabetes, and you get a scratch go and get it checked out - we neglect these things, but we can't risk it," he said.

"Don't do what I did and think it's going to heal. It could have cost me my leg and my life."

People with Type 2 Diabetes should ask their doctor, podiatrist or nurse for a foot assessment.

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ABOUT WOUND AWARENESS WEEK

Wound Awareness Week is an annual initiative of [Wounds Australia](#) - the peak body for wounds care and management in Australia through advocacy, education and research.

For more information on Wound Awareness Week and chronic wounds, visit [the Wound Aware website](#).

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Interviews are available with John Cocomello and Wounds Australia CEO Anne Buck.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Alys Francis on 0476 287 787 or alys@fiftyacres.com