

Linda Ellard, APRN-CNS, on What the Next Year Will Ask of Infection and Pain Care

Linda Ellard, an APRN-CNS based in Bixby, Oklahoma, lays out where she expects infectious disease, pain management, and wound care to shift over the next year, and what she is telling colleagues to prepare for.

Bixby, Oklahoma Oct 14, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Linda Ellard has worked in infectious disease since 2019, after years as a hospitalist and before that a burn nurse. She also practices in chronic pain management and addiction treatment, both since 2019, and has added wound care to her work since 2024.

She says the biggest change she expects over the next year is not a new disease or a new drug. It is how often one patient now sits across all three of her specialties at once.

"A patient with a chronic wound is often also managing pain, and sometimes managing a history with opioids," Ellard says. "Five years ago those were three separate referrals. Now they show up in the same visit."

Infectious Disease: Fewer Clean Cases

Ellard says infectious disease consults used to arrive with a clearer story: a fever, a culture, a course of treatment. She expects that to keep getting messier over the coming year, as more patients carry layered conditions that complicate a straightforward diagnosis.

"The organism is still the organism," she says. "But what is happening around it, a wound that will not close, pain that needs managing, medication histories that need care, all of that changes how I treat it."

Her approach has been to lean on the range she built as a hospitalist, where she worked alongside specialists across many areas of medicine. She expects that kind of cross-specialty fluency to matter more, not less, in the year ahead.

Pain and Addiction Treatment: Watching the Same Patient Longer

In chronic pain management and addiction treatment, Ellard expects the next year to put more weight on long-term tracking rather than single encounters.

"A pain management plan that looks right in one visit can look very different six months later," she says. "I tell people starting out in this area to expect to revise their thinking often, not just their prescriptions."

She points to her own early lesson in the field: a case where she waited on lab results before acting, and a patient ended up in surgery the next day. It reshaped how she handles any delay now. She says that instinct, to consult rather than wait, matters even more as patient histories get more complicated.

Wound Care Catching up With the Rest

Wound care is the newest addition to Ellard's practice, and she expects it to keep closing the gap with her other specialties over the coming year. She says wound care has historically been treated as its own lane, separate from infectious disease, when in practice the two are rarely separate.

"I came to wound care already thinking about the organisms behind an infection, not just the wound itself," she says. "I expect more providers to start working that way too, because the patients make them."

She says the practical shift she is watching for is less about new treatments and more about timing: catching a wound early, before it becomes a longer infectious disease problem.

What She Tells Colleagues to Watch

Asked what she tells other providers heading into the next year, Ellard keeps it short.

"Stay patient and keep asking questions," she says. "Most of what I have learned came from staying curious past the point where I thought I already understood something."

She also points to the basics that shaped her own path: setting realistic, individual goals rather than trying to solve everything at once, and staying grounded in feedback from peers rather than chasing an external measure of success.

"I do not think the field changes because of one big shift," she says. "It changes because a lot of us keep paying attention to the same overlapping patients and adjust as we go."

To read more, visit the website [here](#).

About Linda Ellard

Linda Ellard is an APRN-CNS based in Bixby, Oklahoma. She began her nursing career in Tulsa in 2009 and has worked in infectious disease care since 2019, alongside chronic pain management and addiction treatment, also since 2019. She added wound care to her practice in 2024. Before her advanced practice career, she spent roughly three years as a burn nurse and later worked as a hospitalist, experience she says shaped the broad clinical view she brings to her current work.

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