

# Thanet And North Kent

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## Lymphoedema Support Group

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7<sup>th</sup> April - 2019

**Dear friends,** Thank you to all those members who came to the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, we again maintained a good attendance with 20 in all

### A few updates from our meeting:

- **Contacts and telephone calls:** Various patients from East and West Kent continue to leave messages needing advice or wanting the clinic /Appointment Hub. I have sent information about the group to 3 people since the January meeting. Another member has also spoken to 3 people in the clinic waiting area promoting the group
- **Brief Service Update:** Heather Smith Specialist Lymphoedema Nurse returns to QVMH for 3 days a week M, T, W. I believe Denise Wilkes KCHT Lead for Specialist Clinical Services is due back very soon but I have not had contact with her as yet  
  
I saw Tracey recently and she shared the presentation for the new patient programme which covers all aspects of self-management of Lymphoedema .I have asked Tracey if she can attend our May meeting to talk about skin care and the New Patient Programme as well as some exercise techniques for SLD. Kay saw her last week and confirmed that Tracey will be joining us
- One of our newer members has told me she will be attending a three day course in the Tripudio Lymphoedema Exercise programme and would be happy to share some of this with the group at some point which would be extremely helpful
- **Hosiery issue:** I did contact Juzo from the group to ask why the night time garments which are suggested for patients cannot then be supplied due to the ridiculously high cost. I had a swift response and in fact the product is not Juzo – I was unfortunately given the wrong supplier information. Jobst supply the garment and I then contacted

them but without a customer service address I used the only email contact available and unsurprisingly I have heard nothing from the company which is based in Germany

- **Advertising:** members took some posters and flyers
- **Easy Kent Cancer Action Group:** I attended the SE CAG Meeting on 9th March. There were some excellent discussions and information sharing. A local GP representative was there and was extremely interested in Lymphoedema – he took my email contact and is hoping to arrange for me to talk to a small group of GPs about Lymphoedema from a patient’s perspective .Lymphoedema was on the agenda and I was given time to speak about the group and patient experience with the KCHT service .Clare Mallet KCHT Lead or Living with and beyond Cancer is raising the awareness of Secondary Lymphoedema through scoping exercises. 20 Practice Nurses completed the Macmillan training course for awareness of patients living with Cancer in 2018 which includes information on Lymphoedema prevention and awareness. A second course will run through 2019. The Cancer Care Club gave their leaflet with the 2019 /20 dates
- **Parliamentary Reception: – Lymphoedema Awareness Commissioning Guidance for Lymphoedema Services in the UK.** This was held on 5th March. At quite short notice a request was sent from the LSN to contact local MPs. M and R, and C wrote to Rosie Duffield (Labour) and I wrote to Roger Gale (Conservative) with differing responses. Rosie Duffield’s assistant was very encouraging with an offer that RD may be able to attend one of our meetings should we request this .I had less of a response from Roger Gale despite him being the MP covering the Groups constituency .An automated response came through with a quite negative tone and suggesting we check his web page – I did so and there is no news on the Reception for Lymphoedema. I have heard nothing from him personally despite sending our last newsletter and giving him an update on the group. There should hopefully be information in the Summer edition of Lymphline
- **Speakers** Tracey Barton Assistant Lymphoedema Practitioner will be at the May meeting to talk about Self-Management and maybe show some exercises from the Tripudio programme in which she was trained. Jan Stuart Lymphoedema Therapist confirmed she will attend the September meeting to speak about MLD. My colleagues Nicola and

Amanda from the Exercise Referral Team at Medway Council will come to the July or November (TBC) meeting to talk to us about Osteoporosis and do some meditation.

Our speaker for this meeting was Angela Merser who is the KCHT Podiatry Locality Manager. Angela has 21 year's experience in podiatry and gave a presentation and talk on foot care and the KCHT Podiatry Service. Provision and patient criteria varies across Kent but Lymphoedema patients qualify for referral by their GP (some areas take self-referrals) It is important to check your own feet daily, use a hand mirror on the floor to see feet whilst sitting down if you cannot bend down easily or cannot raise your feet up to see them. Looks can be deceiving so feel for hard skin and any changes too.

The seven steps to maintaining healthy feet:

1. **Check feet daily:** top and bottom of each foot and in between the toes .Use surgical spirit to wipe between toes to help keep dry
2. **Maintain healthy skin:** do not soak feet for more than 3 minutes. Prevent dry skin by moisturising the feet twice daily; top, bottom and heel in one direction. Leave for 5 minutes to soak into skin - Do not moisturise between the toes. For very dry skin place a plastic bag over moisturised foot to create humidity , place a sock over the bag and leave to soak in
3. **Maintain toe nails:** Cut toe nails straight across and curve gently around the sides using nail scissors or clippers. Nails are softer after a bath or shower so will be easier to cut. File nails weekly to limit regrowth using a diamond metal file (around £9 to buy)
4. **Check for and treat fungal infections:** these occur when skin is moist generally occurring between the toes and can cause soreness, itching, a red rash, and pustules or blistering. Treat with over the counter creams and sprays (Lamisil is very good) Tablets can be prescribed but may cause long term side effects. Tea Tree Oil (recommended by the LSN) can help prevent athlete's foot when used daily between the toes but there is no scientific evidence for its use. Fungal nail infections can be painful with nails flaking ,breaking , discolouring and thickening ; treat with paints and lacquers and use a soft baby toothbrush to clean under nails .Use treatments for 2 -3 weeks even after symptoms disappear
5. **Check for corns and calluses** - these are thickened areas of hard skin, yellowish in colour often forming on the toes, balls of the feet due to friction and pressure ,the gait of your walk and foot wear that is too tight . Hard skin protects the foot but then causes pain and problems itself. Self-care and prevention includes using emollients and heel balms e.g. Flexitol available on prescription or to buy; use a foot file when

feet are dry but don't use grater style files as these can rip the skin . Toe dividers and gel covers can help. Regular appointments with a Podiatrist will help maintain your feet. Soft corns can form between the toes and tight hosiery can be a contributory factor – wearing open toe stockings will prevent humidity between toes. Most companies do open toe versions of garments .Blood spots can occur and will turn to ulceration without treatment.

6. **Wear sensible footwear:** chose the right shoes for you and the activities you do. Heels are fine for special occasions but not all day. Make sure you shoes are the right size in length and width, with a round roomy toe area. Soft uppers without seams, a low heel and fastened with laces, buckles or Velcro straps to hold the shoe in place will provide comfort and support. Buy for comfort rather than style, DB Shoes do many stylish wider fit shoes and boots, Cosy Feet also have a good range. If you have Lymphoedema of the legs it is sensible to buy shoes later in the day when the foot will be more swollen .To check if shoes fit make a card template of your own feet (stand on the card and draw around each foot then cut out shape ) Insert the template inside the shoe , if it bends the shoe is too tight
7. **Working together:** The patient, Lymphoedema Team, Podiatrist ,Consultants, GP and Orthoptist can all work together to achieve the best results

Angela was asked about:

- i. In growing toenails; these are caused by a deformity within the foot and can be hereditary. Trauma and wearing tight shoes will push the nail inwards .They are not age related and often require minor surgery to remove all or part of the nail
- ii. Chilblains: these are caused by feet getting cold. Balmosa cream available to buy was advised to prevent and treat chilblains .Try to maintain the chilblain at its pink stage, as once broken it creates an open wound and risk of infection – not good if you have Lymphoedema! Keep the feet warm, lose socks in bed, lined boots in winter, furry insoles. Hepca Fleecy Web available to buy on line, is an adhesive padding which can help prevent chilblains breaking and also helps to stop rubbing on areas of the feet sensitive to pressure areas

Podiatrists are registered with the Health Professional Council HPC. Private practitioners can be found via telephone directories. KCHT Point of Access Administration Hub contact telephone No: 0300 1123 6756. GP referral for the Canterbury area; Self-Referral Thanet and SE Coastal

From the feedback I have received I think everyone gained knowledge on care of their own feet and all have agreed that Angela was an excellent speaker. I have sent our thanks to Angela

- The raffle raised £20. 00. Thank you to everyone for the support given to our raffle and continuing to donate prizes and to Heather for organising. Usual thanks goes to members for organising the refreshments, which went very smoothly with having purchased a new large kettle and everyone helping by waiting for the drinks to be sorted

**2019 Meeting dates :**

- 18th May -Tracey Barton  
Ass Lymphoedema  
Practitioner
- 27<sup>th</sup> July -TBC
- 28<sup>th</sup> September -Jan  
Stewart Lymphoedema  
Therapist
- 23<sup>rd</sup> November -TBC

Saturdays from 10.00am to 12.30pm in the Function Room QVMH

Take care everyone and do keep smiling 😊 . I am afraid that I will not be able to join you for our meeting on 18th May as I will be on holiday. I will leave you in the very capable hands of A and K who will lead the meeting for me and Tracey will join you to talk about Lymphoedema self-care and management. I'm sure you will all have a good meeting and catch up with one another and I will look forward to seeing you all in July

With very best wishes

*Sarah X*