

# AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, DISCUSS AND SHARE EXPERIENCES

Christine Moffatt

Welcome to the autumn edition of the journal. It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first International Lymphoedema Framework (ILF) Conference that will be taking place at the Ascot conference centre, near London, from the 21st to the 23rd April, 2009. This is an important event in the calendar of the ILF project, as it celebrates the launch of the international element of the work.

This work began in the UK in 2002 with a national lymphoedema framework. The aim of the project was to provide, through partnership, evidence that lymphoedema is an important and poorly resourced healthcare issue that requires policy change to ensure improved care in the UK. One of the primary objectives was to identify best practice and to implement improved care within lymphoedema services. A common research methodology was used to evaluate the changes in clinical and other healthcare outcomes. This work will be presented during the conference.

The International Lymphoedema Framework Conference has been designed to bring practitioners, researchers, patients and industry together from all parts of the world to discuss the challenges for improving care for those suffering from lymphoedema and lymphatic filariasis. The ILF project recognises that lymphoedema is a global problem. Lymphoedema caused by lymphatic filariasis (LF) affects 120 million people worldwide in 80 countries and has

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been highlighted as one of the five main neglected tropical diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) are currently engaged in producing a White Paper to address the challenges of wound healing and lymphoedema management in developing countries

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where lymphoedema is endemic. The ILF are delighted to be a partner in this project.

In the West, the causes of lymphoedema are different and yet the clinical challenges are common to all. Debilitating infection is one such problem that requires a global response to alleviate the impact that disabling cycles of infection have on people's lives. The conference will allow for a meeting of minds and a sharing of experience from people working in very different healthcare settings, with different healthcare philosophies.

In addition to the main programme, the conference will host a global village where information from different parts of the world will be displayed and events will be held where people can come and talk with others from around the world.

One of the partners in this conference is NHS Live, a branch of the Department of Health who are joining us to support the event and will run an entire afternoon session on how we can look differently and creatively at the problems we face. This session will be entirely interactive and will engage all the conference participants.

Another exciting dimension of the conference is the patient conference that will run on the middle day and is being led by a patient support group, the Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN). Patients are also welcome to join the main conference and share with all the other events.

A number of key international documents will be launched on areas of practice, namely: *Template for Practice: compression hosiery in lymphoedema of the upper body*; *Template for Practice: children with lymphoedema*; *Management of Chronic Oedema/Lymphoedema in the Community: guidelines for practice*, and a distance learning pack for compression hosiery in lymphoedema.

At the heart of the conference is the launch of the ILF project, which seeks to engage countries in developing national lymphoedema framework projects based on the concept of partnership with professionals, patients and industry that will lead to improved practice and clinical and cost outcomes.

We warmly invite you to this event. JL

For further details on the International Lymphoedema Framework conference and to register, please go online to: [www.wounds-uk.com](http://www.wounds-uk.com)