

A TIME FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Christine Moffatt

This is an important time in the work of the International Lymphoedema Framework (ILF) as the conference at Ascot comes to fruition. This event will bring together many of the international groups who are working to improve the lives of patients with lymphatic disorders. Delegates at the conference are coming from around the world. This will really be an opportunity to learn together and appreciate the western and eastern approaches to management.

The work of the ILF has seen major advances in the last few months. The American Lymphoedema Framework goes from strength to strength. This initiative is headed by Professor Jane Armer and Dr Joseph Feldman and has its academic home at Missouri University. We are delighted that so many of the steering group are able to join us in Ascot, thanks to the generous support of the American Cancer Society.

Another major framework has also been launched in Canada under the excellent leadership of Professor Anna Towers and Dr David Keast. This framework has an excellent partnership with a strong patient association, the Lymphovenous Association of Ontario is at the forefront of this initiative. The ILF will join a Canadian conference in November to run a stakeholder conference to plan the approach required in Canada. We are delighted that our Canadian colleagues will be able to join us in Ascot and contribute to the event.

The most recent framework to launch is the Scottish Framework under

the leadership of Margaret Sneddon at Glasgow University Medical School. A number of initiatives are underway following a stakeholder conference in February. The group plan to look at implementing the Best Practice document. A Scottish network is being established to continue this work.

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Our colleagues in Japan are also continuing to develop lymphoedema at Tokyo University under the leadership of Professor Hiromi Sanada. One of their primary goals is to develop a robust education programme to train professionals.

There are many other initiatives that are also developing in the field of lymphoedema. Of great importance is the World Health Organization (WHO) White Paper in Wound Healing and Lymphoedema, headed by Dr John Macdonald from the USA. He and colleagues such as Terence Ryan are championing this work. A number of country visits have been undertaken and the report will be available in different languages.

While elimination of lymphatic filariasis with drug therapy is proposed as an important goal, it is now acknowledged that many millions of patients continue to live with the

effects of this condition. There is also a growing realisation that not all patients in areas endemic to filariasis may have lymphoedema due to this cause. New cases of lymphoedema are emerging in places such as China, where the condition was considered to be eliminated. This reinforces the need to consider that lymphoedema is a truly global problem requiring our international collaboration.

At Ascot we are also glad to welcome the Global Association to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF), who are the main organisation tackling the elimination of lymphatic filariasis through mass drug administration (MDA) programmes. Other organisations, such as LEPRa, are also active in the arena of lymphoedema morbidity control and will be presenting their work at the conference.

A major ethos underpinning the work of the ILF has been its partnership with patients. At Ascot, in addition to the professional conference, there will also be a patient conference run by our partners, the Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN). Over 120 patients will attend a programme dedicated to their needs.

The British Lymphology Society (BLS), one of our partners, are running an important programme during the week of the Ascot conference: a Lymphoedema Awareness Campaign. This has an ambitious strategy that will engage national and local media, provide key information to all GPs in the UK and really place lymphoedema in the hearts and minds of those working in the NHS. They have the support of a number of Members of Parliament (MPs) in this work. We wish them every success in this important endeavour. Their work will be profiled on the BLS stand and in other events during the conference. JL

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