



Lymphedema Matters

Association of Ontario

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Empowerment by the LAO staff, Radosna and JoAnne

It has been a busy start at the LAO—settling into our new roles and office space, planning the Charity Walk and Conference while responding to numerous calls and emails from individuals affected by lymphedema, and meeting with professionals involved in the care of lymphedema.

We are continually amazed to hear the personal stories of perseverance to get information and effective treatment for the management of lymphedema—stories from both individuals and professionals. The calls we have received are from the individual themselves or from a loved one who is advocating on their behalf. It is even more obvious that there isn't a "magic pill" for treating lymphedema but rather it is a journey in acceptance and taking control with a combination of self-management, professional and personal support and dedication to life style changes. Individuals living with lymphedema need support to be empowered to self-manage their condition and life!

The personal stories also emphasize that lymphedema management is not a destination; rather it is a journey that individuals are on for the remainder of their lives. We have heard that informed and engaged individuals and families gain the confidence and capacity to participate fully in planning and self-managing their lymphedema to stay healthy. To achieve this, we have been told that they take an active role in their health, have the supports to help them manage their lymphedema as much as possible and develop the personal skills and the community needed to keep themselves healthy. Informed and engaged individuals feel empowered and optimistic. We recognize that the LAO plays an important role in educating and connecting individuals at a time when they feel confused, overwhelmed and desperate to understand and manage their condition.

Being empowered requires acceptance and dedication to a life journey that includes lymphedema. It is the journey of the whole individual—holistic empowerment, not just focusing on the

affected and swollen body part. Holistic empowerment typically includes:

- Taking action to promote overall health and to build physical reserve through such things as regular exercise, proper nutrition, adequate rest, stress reduction and sleep.
- Collaborating with the health care and therapy providers, following recommended treatment protocols, knowing how to recognize symptoms and signs in need of attention and seeking help immediately.
- Managing the impact of the chronic condition on one's emotional life, social life and relationships, seeking and accepting support as needed.

As we conduct our administrative duties, and work on communications and events, we find the greatest satisfaction through the connections we make in helping individuals who call upon the LAO for information and direction!

Lymphedema Association of Ontario

Committed to improving the lives of people living with lymphedema

3044 Bloor Street West, Suite 299
Toronto, Ontario M8X 2Y8

416-410-2250

Toll Free: 1-877-723-0033

info@lymphontario.ca

Charitable Registration number

87165 5049 RR0001

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Clinical Guidelines

International Lymphoedema Framework (ILF) Best Practise Document - 2nd Edition

- Position Document: Compression Therapy (2012)
- Position Document: Surgical Intervention (2012)
- ILF Focus Document - Care of Children with Lymphoedema (2011)
- ILF Focus Document - The Management of Lymphoedema in Advanced Cancer and Oedema At the End of Life (2011)

International Consensus Document - Best Practice for the Management of Lymphoedema - 1st Edition (2006)

- <http://www.lympho.org/resources.php>

ACS - A Primer on the Identification and Management of Lymphedema in Oncology (2009)

- <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3322/caac.20001/abstract>

ISL Consensus Document on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Peripheral Lymphedema (2009)

- http://www.u.arizona.edu/~witte/2003_consensus.pdf

National Lymphedema Network (USA) Guidelines and Position Documents

- <http://www.lymphnet.org>

A Prospective Surveillance Model for Rehabilitation for Women with Breast Cancer (2012)

- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>

Aqua Lymphatic Therapy

Aqua Lymphatic Therapy (ALT) is based on the principles of the Casley–Smith exercise program for lymphedema and is applied in an aquatic environment. The method enhances traditional CDT lymphedema therapy by combining principles of lymphatic anatomy and physiology with the effect of water immersion.

The water temperature ranges from 31°C to 33°C (78.8-91.4°F). At this temperature, slow limb movement can be performed without increasing swelling. The buoyancy of the water holds the limb afloat, enabling exercises and self massage with minimal effort while swelling reduction is facilitated by the hydrostatic pressure of the water which increases lymph and venous return (similar to the effect of a compression garment).

ALT involves self-treatment in a group setting. Participants are encouraged to choose the exercises which benefit them the most. They are provided a chart with their limb measurement results every month to help them decide how best to continue their individual treatment plan. The participants are thus provided with the tools they need to carry out self-treatment at their convenience and the physiotherapist serves as a resource, but does not direct the individual plans of care. This method provides active opportunities for self-directed care that may enhance self-advocacy, independence and self-esteem.

For more information about ALT, including therapists that are trained in ALT and/or group classes visit www.aqua-lymphatic-therapy.com