

“I want to walk in my wellington boots”

Judith Patton, Tissue Viability Nurse, The Ulster Independent Clinic, Belfast.



An immediate reduction in Mrs P's oedema following management with made to measure hosiery - showing that this type of hosiery can be modern and attractive, leading to a positive self-image.

Introduction

Mrs P is a forty two year old lady who had been living with 'large heavy legs' for approximately five to six years and they continued to increase in size (Figure 1 & 2). She had attended her GP on several occasions but was given no diagnosis or explanation as to the cause and this was having an increasing impact on her quality of life. For example, she was too embarrassed to wear a skirt and was unable to go swimming with her young children. Her one main aim was to fit into a pair of wellington boots to go walking. She even used the search engine Google to try and find a plastic surgeon who performed liposuction, as she felt this was the only way to treat her 'fat legs'. Mrs P attended a private clinic to pursue this. It was only then that she was told she had primary lymphoedema, a condition she had never even heard about.

Method

The consultant in the private clinic asked the Tissue Viability Nurse to arrange measuring and fitting of compression hosiery. As Mrs P worked full time and had a young family, bandaging was not a feasible option and would not have fitted into her lifestyle. It was therefore decided to try made-to-measure Class 2 panty hose style hosiery*.

	Left Leg	Right Leg
Initial Measurement		
Ankle	26cms	27cms
Calf	48cms	48cms
Thigh	60cms	65cms
Six Months Later		
Ankle	22cms	23cms
Calf	42cms	43cms
Thigh	52cms	58cms

Results

The results of the treatment are presented in the table opposite and represent six months of therapy.

Discussion

Mrs P was a young lady who suffered from a life-changing chronic condition. She had been failed by the Healthcare professionals with whom she had come into contact - a problem still commonly encountered in lymphoedema management (Green and Mason, 2006).

Mrs P was an excellent patient and totally compliant with her treatment, which meant she saw immediate results. Initially on seeing the hosiery, Mrs P was shocked at the look of them and found it difficult to apply. However, after two weeks she had developed a technique and found it was no problem. Mrs P also stated that on one occasion she and her husband had slept in, it was not until later on in the day when she was able to apply the hosiery. She said that she could not wait to put them on, as her legs felt so heavy and uncomfortable without them.

Mrs P has just received her most recent pair of hosiery in black and she states that she loves them. Her aim now is to purchase a pair of long boots and buy a dress (Figure 3). She cannot believe she is even thinking about this after all the years of only wearing loose trousers.

It is these relatively trivial things to others which make a difference to patients with lymphoedema and help so much with compliance.

Conclusion

Diagnosis and correct specialist treatment significantly improved Mrs P's quality of life and she now understands her condition and is fully compliant. After three months she was able to wear those wellington boots (Figure 4 & 5) and go swimming with her children.

Reference

Green T, Mason W (2006) Chronic oedemas: identification and referral pathways. British Journal of Community Nursing. The Lymphoedema Supplement. Apr, 11(4) S8, S10-6.