



# Difficulties with getting the right compression garment quickly?

Difficulties in getting the right compression garment dispensed within a short time frame are all too common for patients with lymphoedema, leading to lots of pharmacy trips, frustration and delays in the start of treatment. Here, leading lymphoedema clinicians outline why the problems occur and what can be done to improve things.



*Melanie Thomas is National Clinical Lead for Lymphoedema in Wales*

“Currently all people with lymphoedema in Wales can access a local lymphoedema service which offers assessment and treatment, as The Welsh Government funded a National Lymphoedema Service in 2011. Compression garments are one of the main components of treatment as they help to support the limb and reduce swelling.

Since March 2006, compression garments have been available on prescription via the FP10. The FP10 is a process where patients can receive medication or a compression garment via a prescription from their General Practitioner or Lymphoedema Specialist to take to a pharmacist for dispensing.

Following complaints from patients that the wrong garments were being issued, Lymphoedema Network Wales undertook an audit which highlighted that 50% of compression garment prescriptions were dispensed incorrectly. Some of the garments issued caused harm. For example, a made to measure garment was prescribed because a patient's limb was larger than standard size, but she was given a ready to wear garment that was extremely small. Some garments prescribed for arm lymphoedema were dispensed in the wrong style or shape that caused swelling into the hand or thigh region. In addition, the patients had to wait a long



time to receive their garment; the average time was an unacceptable 42 days.


Through communication and collaboration with the Community Pharmacies, we established a project to reduce waste, harm and variation. This included the introduction of a simple communication form given to the patients and faxed to the patient's community pharmacist. This approach resulted in a reduction of the time waiting for a garment to 10 days and a reduction of garments wrongly dispensed from 50% to 5%. Improving communication and sharing of pertinent knowledge with the right people at the right time made a significant improvement to patient care.

Lymphoedema Network Wales undertook an audit which highlighted that 50% of compression garment prescriptions were dispensed incorrectly.

It is of vital importance that patients understand what garments are being ordered for them and from which company. The communication form enables the patient to be kept fully informed of their treatment and provides written confirmation

of product description, size, colour and manufacturer's details.

Many patients think that the prescribing process is long winded and cannot understand

why lymphoedema specialists can't provide the right garment in their clinic appointment. Logically this makes sense thus in Wales we are exploring whether a more streamlined process can occur." 



*Caitriona O'Neill is Lymphoedema Lead, Accelerate CIC*


“**C**ompression hosiery can pose many challenges for clinicians, there are over 10,000 products on prescription with more coming out each year. With this in mind there are often delays with prescribing largely due to the complexities and the varied options that prescribers have to work with.

These delays have a burden of cost in that patients can deteriorate or they are being managed in unnecessary bandaging until such time as the hosiery arrives.



Within our local area we are about to pilot a scheme within one CCG where the clinicians can order garments direct. The predicted benefits of this are reduced GP time and frustration, reduced clinician time in making and following up on requests, reduced errors and, most importantly, the patient will get the required items in a timely fashion without any delays to treatment. Sourcing solutions is a must within this field as it will allow for the varied


garments required to be acquired for the patient quickly, seamlessly and without any errors or switching of products.

Throughout, the main consideration always needs to be our patients. They want and need a good fit so that they are comfortable, that the garment can be seen to have a clinical effect and that they can apply their garment easily. It should not be a burdensome process for them.” 



*Mary Woods is Lead Nurse Lymphoedema Services, The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust*

“**D**ifficulties can arise with patients obtaining the correct compression garment on prescription. It is great that so many products are available now, but the prescribing is not easy for GPs and other prescribers who cannot easily identify the requested product code on some ordering systems. This can lead to the patient being prescribed an incorrect garment that could be detrimental to the management of their lymphoedema.

Daylong have been supportive in trying to resolve the problem and are keen to work towards a solution.” 

## Contact us

If you would like to comment on this or any other features or contribute to a future edition of *In this together*

Please write to us at [editorial@Daylong.co.uk](mailto:editorial@Daylong.co.uk)