

Dear Sir,

This letter is in relation to the removal of the code number from Medicare that now prevents people with hypoxic wounds having hyperbaric treatment to help heal the wound. Dr Hodgson and his medical and nursing team have extensive expertise in wound care, which combined with hyperbaric therapy does heal ulcers, regardless of the cause. To exclude everyone, with the exception of diabetics who suffer from leg ulcers is inhumane and cruel to say the very least. Are you aware of the pain an ulcer can cause? To know that there is a treatment that will help to heal the ulcer, and not be able to have the treatment that will cure it.

I have been a nurse for over thirty years with post graduate studies including a Bachelor of Applied Science Nursing, a Master of Nursing, among others, and having suffered an ulcer on my right ankle as a result of multiple surgeries with severe complications resulting in an hypoxic wound, I consider I am qualified to comment on this issue.

After a fall on stairs in 1985, I sustained a damaged right ankle which resulted in nine surgeries and many complications, including among other things, osteomyelitis, wound infections and eventually the development of an ulcer on the lateral side of my foot. In 1999 I was referred to the Alfred Hospital where I undertook extensive hyperbaric treatment, which completely healed the ulcer.

Another ulcer developed in 2008 and was treated conservatively by dermatologist Dr including such treatments as Bactroban ointment [antibiotic], Manuka honey flakes, Silver impregnated dressings, Flaminal, to name a few.

On 10/12/08 the right knee collapsed and was found to be fractured due to a condition called Complex Regional Pain Syndrome [CRPS] which had been diagnosed in 1986: this complex condition affects the nervous system, among other parts of the body and has a profound effect on the circulation causing the affected limb to be cold, blue and extremely painful. It was found that the CRPS had caused necrosis of the bone in the Tibia and Femur in the right leg, causing the knee to collapse, requiring surgery with a profound amount of bone grafting, however the surgeon would not attempt the surgery until the ulcer was healed due to concern of introducing infection into the knee prosthesis.

I was referred to Dr Martin Hodgson at the Hyperbaric Wound Centre in May 2009; it was found that the right leg was profoundly hypoxic requiring hyperbaric treatment which was

commenced and after 38 treatments a skin graft was attempted, followed by further hyperbaric treatment to enhance the success of the skin graft. This was partially successful and the surgery was done, although the ulcer was not completely healed the reduction in size was profound.

There is no doubt that the evidence that the hyperbaric treatment had a profound effect on the healing of the ulcer; for almost a year of conventional treatment to the ulcer, there had been very little to no improvement, then after the hyperbaric treatment in the first instance the ulcer was completely healed and in the second instance the surgery clearly would not have been attempted until the ulcer had been healed, or at the very least reduced in size. I am enraged when I read that there is no evidence that hyperbaric treatment has no effect on wound healing; from my experience this has a very important place in wound healing. It is cruel to exclude hypoxic ulcers, and wounds from this treatment, as I have shown it does have a very important place in wound healing. I understand the need for diabetics to need this treatment; however I cannot believe that people with hypoxic wounds should be excluded when there is an obvious need.

Dr Hodgson and his team provide a valuable service; it is incomprehensible that this service to patients with hypoxic wounds should be just ignored by the government. CRPS never goes away, it can only get worse and there will be a time in the future when another hypoxic ulcer will break down at which time I will not be able to have the needed treatment; the worst case scenario is that I may very well lose my leg, as this was a real possibility this time, avoided only because of the hyperbaric treatment, and who will I hold responsible? Do politicians have the right to play God with people's lives, and that is what you are doing; you may think I am over reacting, however if this was your partner, loved one, or Heaven forbid child's leg, how would you feel when they were told they can no longer have the treatment that may just avoid losing their leg?

I would urge you to reconsider this issue, as it is more than just removing a code number from Medicare; this involves people's lives, people who suffer from severe pain which affects every facet of their lives.

Yours Sincerely