

Secretary Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Parliament House
Canberra

Re: After Gynaecological Cancer.

In 1989 I was diagnosed with endometrial cancer and had a radical hysterectomy with removal of surrounding lymph nodes followed by radiotherapy.

Lymphoedema appeared shortly afterwards and over the succeeding years has gradually become worse with both legs being affected.

I attend a private messenger for Manual Lymph Drainage once a month, not enough but all I can afford; it did not appear that the local Hospital would offer this treatment. From the Hospital I receive occasional bandaging and compression stockings.

The impact of the condition on lifestyle is quite considerable, time consuming and expensive. It is not pleasant to wear heavy garments in the heat of summer and they need careful laundering. Every few months I succumb to an infection due to bacteria building up in the areas of poor lymphatic circulation; this requires immediate antibiotic therapy and bed rest - digestive problems follow. I have to be ever mindful to have a prescription and antibiotic at hand - sometimes difficult when travelling; not all Drs appreciate that an untreated infection can be life threatening. The increase of swelling throughout the day is painful and tiring & requires frequent rests. Exercise and diet have to be considered.

I think that any treatments for lymphoedema other than Manual lymph Drainage such as lasers are not yet proven and probably the only effective thing is the hands on approach. I wonder if, in the hospital setting, the use of extensive trained physiotherapists is strictly necessary, perhaps well trained aides could perform the required massage and bandaging under supervision.

General Practitioners appear to have a limited knowledge of the condition and its impact. I feel sure there are many untreated cases hidden in the community.

I can only suggest that consideration and support be given to all sufferers of lymphoedema with the aim of keeping the condition under control; later treatments are going to be less effective and possibly require the expense of hospitalisation.

Ann Bancroft