

# Teamwork

## to better manage lymphedema

### Case study outlining the importance of a multidisciplinary approach

By Anne-Marie Crépin, Naïla Nehmé, and Nathalie Côté

Lymphedema is a condition for which treatment requires time, expertise and commitment from both the patients and the professionals treating them. So a multidisciplinary team was formed to offer optimal therapy to a patient with lymphedema, during the decongestion and maintenance phases.

#### Background

A patient aged 76, suffering from spinal stenosis, has been wheelchair bound for 10 years. Because of his limited mobility, he developed an undiagnosed bilateral lymphedema of the lower extremities, and weighed 135 kg. More specifically, his feet were swollen to the point



that he could no longer wear shoes. Having contracted a bacteria that caused an inflammatory cellulitis, he was hospitalized for two months and treated with antibiotics.

During his hospitalization, he had open wounds on his right leg and his limb was blue-black. At this point, lymphedema was diagnosed. His feet were swollen, with strong fibrosis on top.

#### Decongestion

A medical prescription recommended a home follow-up for skin care, the intervention of an orthotist, the application of Comprilan® short stretch bandages on the lower limbs and Combined Decongestive Therapy (CDT). The nurse from the local community service center (CLSC), after attempting to reduce edema, decided to contact Anne-Marie Crépin, a therapist specializing in CDT.

A total of 23 CDT treatments on both legs were administered over a period of more than seven months, twice a week. After the decongestion phase, a volume reduction of the feet of over 20% was observed.

#### Maintenance

In preparation for the maintenance therapy, various members of the multidisciplinary team met to assess the patient's overall situation in order to propose therapy solutions for the maintenance phase. The patient's needs and lifestyle were taken into consideration.

Nathalie Côté, a nurse and lymphology specialist and Nancy Bonneau, (both from BSN Medical), offered comprehensive training to the team



on the various compression options available and helped select the most appropriate garment for the patient's needs. Nathalie and Nancy provided clinical and technical support and ensured that everyone was comfortable with the use of JOBST® products.

Naïla Nehmé, an orthotist, determined the choice of fabrics according to the medical prescription and the stage of lymphedema. The option of JOBST® FarrowWrap® seemed ideal as this short stretch compression wrap allows for both day and night wear. It offers the possibility to easily adjust the garment throughout the entire duration of the therapy, allowing for a better fit and optimal results. In addition, this wrap system provides firm and comfortable compression. Naïla also used a JOBST® Elvarex® foot glove to maintain the pressure at the toes. Edema is known to slip in areas where the pressure is lower, often at the extremities of a compression garment. "With the addition of the foot glove, we can ensure that any edema at the toes is controlled", Naïla said.

#### Delivery of garments and follow-up

The orthotist and the multidisciplinary team helped the patient with the fitting the following week and verified that he was comfortable with the garments. Each member of the team was present to assist the patient, answer his questions and help him become more familiar with all the products used. At the patient's request, Anne-Marie continues with a follow-up every two weeks and administers manual lymphatic drainage to prevent fluid accumulation in the legs, since he is immobile.

#### Teamwork: a winning combination!

The success rate of such a practice is a factor of success of the therapy. Open communication and involvement of each party brings clear value. Ultimately, the patient is well taken care of and is committed to self-management, which leads to better tolerance and therefore, better adherence to prescribed treatment.

**Anne-Marie Crépin**, certified Dr. Vodder School-International therapist specialized in Combined Decongestive Therapy (CDT), **Naïla Nehmé**, Orthotist-Prosthetist, Actimed Orthopedic Laboratories and **Nathalie Côté**, nurse and lymphology specialist, BSN Medical.

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