

The Legs Matter campaign: 'get loud for legs' what a fantastic week we had!



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So the 12th – 16th October was the Legs Matter awareness week, where we got 'loud about legs' and 'shouted about feet'. COVID-19 is having many impacts, not just in terms of patients directly infected by the virus, but by frightening patients into not leaving their homes or restricting people's access to healthcare services. However, now more than ever we need to continue to raise the awareness of leg and feet conditions in an attempt to target prevention and early intervention. Despite COVID-19 we all recognise that individuals cannot afford to wait to tackle leg and foot problems. We need to empower patients to not remain silent and to remind health professionals that leg and foot patients may have gone quiet, but they have not gone away. We should ensure all patients are receiving the right care at the right time, as the longer that lower limb conditions go untreated the more costly and more a burden to healthcare services and the patient they become.

Our awareness was different this year, we could not hold stands in market halls, natter with the public in shopping centres or provide any face-to-face education events. Instead we used our online platforms to try and reach patients. The one thing COVID-19 has done is help to break down some of the technology barriers with the public making greater use of technology in searching, zooming, facetimeing etc. I certainly know my own elderly parents are now much more comfortable with this form of communication.

During the awareness week we hosted 42 events within the newly created virtual 'Legs Matter Lounge' where we were able to share patient/public focused sessions on how to keep your legs active, what are the early signs and symptoms they should look out for and, if they are concerned, when should they ask for health professional advice. We also did a number of sessions on understanding their own conditions, what this meant to them and how can they

might help themselves. These sessions triggered a great number and variation of questions and conversations.

The patient stories that we shared provided a different and direct insight into what it is like to be at the other end of a diagnosis, how this impacts individuals' day-to-day life, their families, their self-esteem and their worries and fears. With the help of funding from L&R we turned three of these patient stories into videos, seeing patients in their own environments, hearing their stories in their own voices I believe makes everyone reflect on the individual we treat in our services. Their individual resilience is inspiring and their ability to bring humour and to continue to smile in the wake of adversity is something which we all need to try and emulate in these challenging current times.

Our website remains our shining glory with the number of assets for the patient, family, carers continuing to grow. Since its creation it has been viewed by nearly half a million people and recently we have added further videos and downloadable leaflets to give to patients. We also understand the need to have 'traditional' printed material for those that cannot access online sites, in total we have sent out almost 200,000 leaflets and most recently 1,845 action packs designed for waiting areas/pharmacy stores.

I do believe the recent awareness week has been a huge success and continues to drive widespread improvement for patients across the UK. I wish to thank all the individuals and societies involved in the Legs Matter coalition for their time and dedication to the cause, I also wish to thank Pink (the marketing company) involved in Legs Matter for all their hard work but mostly I wish to thank YOU. In September/October I challenged our army of supporters to get creative and loud for legs and by heck did you deliver — you blew me away. To everyone



Legs Matter Pink Flamingos : Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust Tissue Viability Team covering Community & Mental Health Services.

who nattered, chatted, created, danced, walked, baked, dressed up (especially the brilliant pink flamingos) you are amazing. The number of social media tweets, retweets and sharing your events turned my twitter feed yellow! The whole week felt outstanding and for me a real feel of patient empowerment with clear focus on making a difference to patients/ public.

Despite the personal and professional challenges

you have faced this year due to COVID-19, you were able to give a little more and it is your commitment, efforts and enthusiasm which really made this week a huge success — I am humbled by your efforts and it really give me hope that one day we will ‘turn the tide’, ensuring that everyone with lower limb conditions receives the care they deserve. Together we can reshape care for all.

Leanne

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