

Legs Get-together: One year on

Legs Get-together opened its doors in September 2012 and is held in the activities room at the Clarence Integrated Care Centre, Rosny Park, Tasmania. Integrated care centres are opening in Australia to provide a range of services oriented towards community care, rather than hospital care, with emphasis on people with chronic and complex conditions (Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). There are successful Leg Clubs based on the Lindsay Leg Club model in four other Australian states, but this was a new concept to Tasmania (The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation, 2005).

Legs Get-together is staffed by community nurses, who are increasing their wound care knowledge through completing the Leg Club Foundation education programme (The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation, 2010) and an Australian education programme (Government of Western Australia, 2012). Nursing staff usually consists of two experienced community nurses and a graduate nurse. Graduate and student nurses working with the service spend time at the Leg Club to increase their wound management knowledge and skills under supervision of experienced nurses.

The volunteers have their own roster, with two attending each week. They try to provide healthy food options for members, such as sandwiches, low-fat dips with vegetables or cracker dippers, fresh and dried fruit, nuts, and sugar-free and low-fat cakes, muffins and scones. A raffle of craft items was held, which raised AUD\$100 for the "kitty", and Leg Club badges have been sold to raise funds.

THE FIRST YEAR

We started the year with waiting-room style plastic chairs, and have since acquired two electric treatment chairs that were being replaced. These have proved to be a huge blessing to our aging knees and backs! We also have access to a third treatment chair beneath a hoist in a clinic room, which has been useful for members requiring transfer assistance.

One of the aims of the Australian Wound Management Association (AWMA) is raising public and professional awareness of the problems associated with chronic wounds (AWMA, 2012). During 2013, we hosted guest speakers for members, staff and the general public. These included a physiotherapist discussing the importance of exercise and had participants pumping

their calf muscles; a dietitian talking about how nutrition affects wound healing, and a podiatrist, with a whole case full of resources and useful information. The podiatrist service is available monthly and is especially beneficial for those with diabetes with foot wounds.

The most notable guest was Ellie Lindsay, who very kindly agreed to take time from her hectic Australian schedule to help us celebrate our first birthday. She left beautiful weather in Sydney to join us on a cold, grey Tasmanian day, which reminded her of England. Ellie was warmly welcomed by members as she spent the morning mingling and chatting to them. During the afternoon, Ellie's tales completely captivated the audience at a staff education session.

Member numbers have increased to an average of 15 attending weekly and results from a satisfaction survey were very positive. One member's wounds healed and remain so after being told they would never heal. He still attends weekly to socialise and delights in telling his story. Wounds that had been present for longer than 2 years healed after attending Leg Club for 9, 12 and 30 weeks. One unexpected outcome was a reduction in pain levels. Many positive comments included: "Made me a happier person," "kept me positive," "got me to go out and socialise as with my leg ulcer I was afraid of what people would say", and "it is the highlight of my week". The only negative comment was a complaint because it is only held once weekly, while one person suggested we all go out for a BBQ!

So what next? Members are currently deciding which speakers they would like this year. A second Tasmanian Leg Club is in the process of being setup. The Leg Club lead is taking on another wound-related role for the next 12 months and hopes to maintain involvement with both Clubs. So, onwards and upwards!

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REFERENCES

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News just in ...

The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation (LLCF) announced the appointment of a new chief executive in January 2014. Julie Carr, a former nurse, has vast experience working with and training tissue viability nurses, leg ulcer specialists, and community and hospital nurses.

Meanwhile, LLCF President Ellie Lindsay is to become chair of the World Union of Wound Healing Societies (WUIWHS) Task Force for Patients Associations for the 2016 WUIWHS Congress held in Florence, Italy.



Ellie Lindsay cutting a leg cake made by Liz Ricketts, community nurse, surrounded by nurses and volunteers.