

Legs Matter update: It's time to act



BETHANY HEAD
Clinical Nurse Specialist, Tissue Viability, Operational Lead, Wound Care Service

That's a wrap for Legs Matter week 2023, which this year took place between the 12 and 16 June. The focus of the Legs Matter week, and indeed this year, has been on the hidden harm crisis in leg and foot care and what we can all do to help tackle it. Obviously not an issue that can be addressed in one week alone, so although Legs Matter awareness week has come to an end, the campaign continues. Awareness week was the start of encouraging people to think about leg and foot harm and the actions they can take to reduce and even prevent it (Figure 1). Throughout the week we shared important information at both virtual and face-to-face events all over the country, all raising the alarm on hidden harm. Many details can be found on our website (Legs Matter, 2023a).

We kicked off the week with a round table discussion, chaired by Alison Hopkins MBE RN, on the hidden harm crisis in leg ulcer management with leading experts from the worlds of community nursing, vascular surgery and the Queens Nursing Institute (QNI). Conversations involved the inadequate use of evidenced-based compression therapy in the community, and patients not being treated adequately or in a timely manner, resulting in the patient being harmed. Panellists went on to explore the reasons for these issues, a common theme being the language used, such as labelling ulcers as 'chronic' and the frustrations clinicians experience in practice due to capacity and time restraints. We all know the key to reducing this harm is the need for a consistent and supported approach to using informed and well documented evidence and guidance. So please do familiarise yourself with guidance, such as the National Wound Care Strategy Programme (NWCSP, 2020) if you haven't done so already.

This harm is unacceptable and avoidable — but we can act to stop this. So, what can you do? Legs Matter have developed some additional resources to support both healthcare professionals and patients with the goal to reduce reducing harm.

Please check out the Legs Matters 10-point plan

to tackle harm. These 10 points need to happen in order to end the hidden harm crisis (Legs Matter, 2023b):

- ▶ Test your knowledge on harm by completing the expert quiz. This quiz has been written by healthcare professionals and is designed for anyone who treats patients with a leg or foot condition, and who wants to test and improve their knowledge on how to deliver the safest care. The quiz includes scenarios where people with a leg or foot condition might be at risk of being harmed. Clinicians can learn what the correct course of action is to avoid this: test your knowledge on leg and foot condition and harm (Legs Matter, 2023c)
- ▶ There's no harm in asking! Encourage patients to ask questions about their foot or leg concerns, to promote them receiving the right care at the right time. Familiarise yourselves as clinicians with the questions patients are encouraged to ask you so you can give them the answers they deserve and are entitled to: Questions to ask your GP or other healthcare professional about your legs and feet (Legs Matter, 2023d)

Other events throughout the week included promoting lower limb health through all ability cycling, legs matter natters with cupcakes, the International Lymphoedema Framework (ILF) Conference, Fundamentals of Lower Limb Care education session and much more!

Legs Matter week 2023 finished with the launch of The Legs Matter Changemaker Awards, with the aim of celebrating the people who are making a difference to end the hidden harm crisis in leg and foot care, as this is a great achievement and people deserve to be recognised!

There are three categories to acknowledge the exceptional work being done by healthcare professionals, healthcare teams and patients. Nominations can be completed online The Legs Matter Changemaker Awards - Legs Matter and close on 29 February 2024. The awards ceremony will be held in May 2024.



- ▶ **Changemaker Champion:** a healthcare professional who has made an outstanding contribution to the treatment of leg and foot conditions
- ▶ **Together for Change Award:** A healthcare team that has worked together to create positive change in the treatment of leg and foot conditions
- ▶ **People Power Award:** A patient or member of the public who's doing outstanding work to heal their own leg or foot condition or to support someone with a leg or foot condition.

Thank you to everyone who participated in 2023 Legs Matter Week, it was another great success, and we look forward to celebrating your

achievements and movement in leg and foot care in the coming year! Please take the time to visit our website and share it with your patients too so we can all work together to prevent harm. We can achieve more by working together than we can by working alone



REFERENCES

Legs Matter (2023a) Legs Matter Week. <https://legsmatter.org/legs-matter-week/> (accessed 29 July 2023)

Legs Matter (2023b) Legs Matter's ten-point plan to tackle harm. <https://tinyurl.com/yf2skaew> (accessed 29 July 2023)

Legs Matter (2023c) Test your knowledge on harm. <https://tinyurl.com/mrxvt47h> (accessed 29 July 2023)

Legs Matter (2023d) No harm in asking. <https://tinyurl.com/9s45hzyp> (accessed 29 July 2023)

National Wound Care Strategy Programme (NWCSP) (2020) Lower Limb Recommendations. <https://tinyurl.com/csy6trnk> (accessed 29 July 2023)



Figure 1. (A) Sirona, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Wound Care Service wearing colourful socks and compression garments to help raise awareness during Legs Matter week. (B) Cupcakes shared with community nurses during Legs Matters matters

