

Reflection from the EWMA conference in Amsterdam



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Each year the Lindsay Leg Club (LLC) Foundation® and industry partners provide a scholarship to the annual European Wound Management Association (EWMA) Conference. All LLC clinicians are encouraged to enter by providing a write-up on the positive aspects of their LLC. Each LLC is individual and has elements that are responsive to local needs. The community environment enables clinical staff to provide holistic care and work with local volunteers to provide social interactions for members with lower leg problems.

Having attended the 2016 EWMA Conference, I felt that going again would help me inspire my LLC and ensure that it is maintaining excellence in care. I therefore applied for the scholarship for a second year running, and was flabbergasted on being informed I was a joint winner.

I attended the 2017 EWMA conference with fellow clinical LLC lead Jess Bergstrom, from Llandrindod Wells Leg Club. The different set-ups of our LLCs added to the positive overall learning experience. My LLC, Best Foot Forward in Poole, only opened in October 2015; Jess and her team have been running a LLC for over 10 years. With my LLC being GP practice led and Jess's LLC community led, we were able to discuss the differences and challenges. Hearing about their team's experience and how they have spread their good work, opening multiple LLCs around the Powys area, was inspiring.

THE EWMA CONFERENCE

Delegates from all over Europe attended the EWMA Conference. International speakers from across the world gave interesting and thought-provoking presentations. I learnt how different healthcare systems work and how financial constraints restrict clinicians' ability to deliver best practice, e.g. in one European country patients have to buy their own dressings, so clinicians are reliant on the patient's ability to afford dressings. This knowledge made me appreciate that, despite current dilemmas in the NHS, we are able to deliver high-quality patient

care without such a restriction as best practice remains core. We should continue to strive to deliver best practice and be proud of our NHS. An Indian surgeon spoke about how he had seen a significant need in his county for effective diabetic foot care and how he had cascaded education on early detection of problems, training colleagues on screening and prevention with an emphasis on how appropriate footwear can reduce amputation rates. His clinical outcomes were outstanding. This talk led me to liaise more actively with local diabetic podiatry specialists and seek ways to ensure preventative care is delivered in a timely and effective manner. Such inspiring talks highlighted the importance of ensuring patients have adequate education and an awareness of risk factors. Transferring this learning enables us to ensure every contact we have with patients counts.

The gold standard of ABPI assessment and ensuring 'effective' compression was highlighted in all talks on venous leg ulcers. This led me to reinforce the standard of clinical practice in my LLC and general practice. There were also many discussions within these presentations stressing the importance of involving patients in their own care and the advantages of a social model. For me this emphasised the underpinning values of the LLC model of a unique partnership empowering patients, providing holistic care and social interaction to enhance members' wellbeing.

RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATIONS AND STANDS

The EWMA Conference gave the opportunity for companies to demonstrate their products, present their research and develop links with clinicians. Many companies presented their research around new products. There was plenty of opportunity to explore the industry stands to view wound care products, compression devices and a variety of health aids.

It was interesting to re-evaluate familiar products and critically analyse others not yet available in the UK. Demonstrations were available

for many devices. Of particular interest to myself and Jess was a new portable smaller Doppler machine with three cuffs for use in the community and GP practices. We had our Dopplers checked to witness its ease of use, and reviewed the clinical trials and research behind its development.

The LLC Foundation had a stand at the conference to promote the Leg Club model. There was a constant flow of delegates from around the world making enquiries at the stand. Lynn was always on hand to exchange information.

NETWORKING

During breaks I had the chance to talk to a variety of delegates. This gave me the opportunity to learn more about different healthcare systems, as well as advise on my personal experience of the LLC model.

Networking is always a positive aspect of attending conferences. It enables new contacts to be made and gives the opportunity to meet experts. When attending conference with Ellie Lindsay OBE, every corner offers a new meeting and introduction to a someone within the field of wound care.

IMPACT ON THE BEST FOOT FORWARD CLUB

Attending the EWMA conference encouraged me to reflect on how far my LLC has come. A significant journey has been made from our early identification of patient needs (with over 50% of treatment room appointments being taken up for leg ulcer care) to today with a lively active LLC with nearly 300 members that has demonstrated improved healing rates and a significant reduction in treatment appointments. Leg ulcer care now accounts for 15–20% of clinical appointments in surgery, which has freed up appointments, enabling us to develop other nursing services in practice.

Discussions with Jess during the EWMA Conference gave me a greater understanding of a community-led LLC and encouraged my consideration of other ways in which nursing

teams could work together for the benefit of the patient. Having an integrated nursing team at our LLC has been of great value for patients and has supported joint team development. The environment has enabled shared learning and the ability to achieve competencies in compression, Dopplers and lower leg care following core training. This is cost-effective for both teams and enables the best use of clinical time.

Reflecting on our clinical outcomes, there is clear evidence of significant improvement in healing. Now >70% of our LLC members are being maintained within the 'well leg' element. There is reduced ulcer recurrence and improving concordance through patient empowerment. This has further reduced demand on clinicians' time in surgery and the community.

The importance of holistic care and the benefits of using a psychosocial model, as stressed in many EWMA Conference presentations this year, is clearly demonstrated by the LLC model. Members have anecdotally reported that their mood and self-esteem have significantly improved and this has been evidenced through a patient survey. This improvement has also been noticed by many clinicians throughout my GP practice, with patients feeding back the benefits when attending for other appointments. Colleagues often ask when are we going to open a 'Respiratory Club' or 'Diabetes Club'!

A VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

To conclude, attending EWMA Conference for a second time has been valuable in many ways and enabled me to learn, evaluate new innovations in wound care and reflect on current care pathways. This was enhanced through shared learning by attending with another LLC lead. It has enabled me to consider how we might improve patient/member care and begin to explore working more closely with community teams and other healthcare clinicians to offer additional care at my LLC, i.e. podiatrist/nutritionist. I would like to thank the LLC Foundation and industry partners for this opportunity.