

Criteria and Guidance for Referral to St Luke's Lymphoedema Service

Introduction

St Luke's Lymphoedema Service provides an inclusive and accessible lymphoedema practitioner-led service. Our team strives to deliver individualised care while being supportive, empathetic and informative. We endeavour to ensure that our patients and carers are empowered to participate in decisions regarding their treatment plans and to encourage self management through specialised education.

We provide a comprehensive service for adults, by delivering community care of COLD (chronic oedema with lymphatic deficiency) patients. We deliver this service in outpatient clinics in Kingsbridge, Tavistock and Plymouth. Under exceptional circumstances we will consider a home visit if the patient is housebound, but this will need to be done by individual negotiation with practitioners.

Criteria for referral to the St Luke's Lymphoedema clinic

The main clinic is based at St Luke's Hospice, Turnchapel, Plymouth (Monday-Friday 08.00-16.00) with two satellite clinics in Tavistock and Kingsbridge. The service is flexible and responsive, supporting people in employment by early clinic availability. Supporting patients at home can be negotiated on an individual basis under exceptional conditions.

Palliative patients are prioritised and are seen in the hospice inpatient unit, as an outpatient, or can be seen at home if required.

Referrals for patients with the following conditions will be accepted:

- Secondary lymphoedema
- Primary lymphoedema
- Lipoedema
- End stage mixed aetiology
- Problematic lymph venous oedemas.

As a therapist-led service, patients with an unconfirmed diagnosis are referred back to the referring Doctor or Consultant requesting all diagnostic tests are performed and the underlying cause is clearly established before the referral is accepted. It is also necessary to establish any underlying contra-indicators to treatments such as heart disease, obstructions, active malignancy, DVT and infection or arterial insufficiency.

For details about the appropriateness of the referral please see the attached referral pathway and contra-indications for both, chronic oedema of upper limbs and neck and for lower limb and genitals.

Exclusion criteria

- Oedema in association with arterial compromise (which requires further medical investigation)
- Dependency/gravitational oedema
- Venous and arterial ulcers present
- Non-complicated lymph venous oedemas
- Lymphorrhoea bandaging – advice/training will be offered to support Community Nurses and Practice Nurses.

Response time

On acceptance of a referral, the therapist will prioritise patients as follows:

- 1) Patients with the following conditions will be offered an initial assessment within ten working days:
 - a. Patients with head and neck oedema
 - b. End of life patients with symptomatic presentation
 - c. Genital oedema
 - d. Complex psychological issues related to oedema
- 2) All other patients will be offered an initial assessment within twelve weeks.
- 3) Patients, who are known to the service and who are calling for telephone advice and support from a Lymphoedema therapist, will receive a response within three working days or within 24 hours for end of life care patients.

Referral route

Referrals will only be accepted on receipt of a completed lymphoedema referral form from Consultants, GPs and Clinical Nurse Specialists. If the patient requires re-referral a further form will need to be completed (see appendix for referral form).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Copy of referral form

Appendix 2 – Flowchart for diagnosis and referral pathway and referrals forms

Further information can be found at: www.stlukes-hospice.org.uk/lymphodema