

Reflections on the World Union of Wound Healing Societies conference

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Since the formation of the Lindsay Leg Club Foundation (LLCF) and the Leg Club Industry Partners a collaborative philanthropic approach has been developed regarding educational marketing and effective communications strategies, including providing educational grants and scholarships to attend world-renowned conferences. Applications are open to all Leg Club nurses and in very early 2020 I was thrilled to find out I had been successful in being awarded a scholarship to attend the 6th World Union of Wound Healing Societies (WUWHS) conference in 2020 in the cultural city of Abu Dhabi.

The WUWHS conference is only held once every 4 years and there is always a planned theme. For the 2020 conference the theme was 'Global Healing. Changing Lives'; little did WUWHS know, at the point of deciding the theme, how much all our lives would change in 2020! My suitcase was packed ready to catch my flight on 7 March 2020, unfortunately we could see the increasingly serious implications of a new virus spreading rapidly around the world and with the emerging COVID-19 pandemic it all had to go on hold.

Two years later, after many sacrifices and tough times working through changes to our way of life, the WUWHS meeting was finally able to go ahead. The organisers made the decision to deliver the conference in a modified format as a hybrid model, enabling those who could not travel to still capture the experience of a conference where world wound care specialists come together.

For those lucky enough to attend in person, the conference was held in the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), on the outskirts of the main city. Many companies, several of whom are industry partners of the LLCF, were present to offer attendees the opportunity to see existing and new products, as well as sharing learning and reviewing the evidence of clinical studies.

The scientific programme involved concurrent days of symposia and workshops

delivered by a wide variety of international experts in all areas of wound care. Reflecting on many of these interesting lectures, the resounding theme that was evident through them all was 'person empowerment and supporting self-care' wherever possible. I wondered how much of this was due to needing to find new ways to manage wounds during lock-downs, or if the world is now realising the impact of psychosocial factors on wound healing. Either way, it was refreshing to hear many experts discuss the importance of the individual being at the centre of any care decisions.

The LLCF symposium was held on the first day of the conference, with good attendance and great conversation being generated about the importance of empowerment and person-focused care. It is a great opportunity to share the key elements of how socialisation and person empowerment within the Leg Club model can make a difference to clinical outcomes, as well as a person's mental and physical wellbeing. The clinical teams and volunteers who support local Leg Clubs see the impact of this on a regular basis but spreading the word is a passion of Ellie Lindsay OBE, also frequently supported by eminent figures such as Professor Keith Harding CBE from the UK, along with many others well known in the wound care field.

I enjoyed meeting an Indian diabetic surgeon, Dr Narayan, who personally takes the time to find out at a person's first consultation what their favourite song is and will then either set a challenge for them to learn the song to sing to him while undergoing treatment or will ensure the song is played for them during their first treatment. Such simple techniques, he felt, can help him to understand the person as a whole and not just as a someone with a certain condition or wound. Sharing experiences of how clinicians attempt to engage and involve individuals and their families shows a shared vision to deliver a more personalised approach to care.

Such opportunities to network with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and cultures are one of the valuable aspects of attending a conference. Hearing them share their knowledge and experiences of wound care from across the world was fascinating, in particular learning of the very different challenges we have all faced in the last couple of years and how new ways of working were developed. Such sharing of expertise and knowledge enables development of new algorithms and consensus documents that provide support and tools for clinicians worldwide to aid clinical assessment and enhance decision making for best practice and to minimise variation in treatment.

LLCF is one of the sister societies (non-voting) of WUWHS. The collaboration between WUWHS and LLCF has seen the introduction of a global task force for patient advocacy in wound care. This concept was warmly embraced and seen as a big step forward in terms of a coordinated partnership approach. Introduced in 2016 by Ellie Lindsay OBE and Roland Renyi, this task force is the International Patient & Carer Advocacy Panel (IPCAP), chaired and led by Ellie Lindsay (President of the LLCF). The IPCAP committee consists of senior clinicians, academics, and scientists working in wound care and related subjects, representatives of healthcare provider organisations and senior figures with a proven track record in patient advocacy.

One example of the collaborative approach to sharing knowledge and expertise is an algorithm called 'Person centred care for individuals living with a wound' produced by the IPCAP. This provides a visual format for individuals to encourage engagement and a holistic approach to clinical intervention. All IPCAP materials are available to download at the Leg Club website: <https://www.legclub.org/the-patient-advocacy-panel-information>

Another example of international collaboration providing expert advice is a series of consensus documents produced by Wounds International on behalf of WUWHS,

where current evidence has been reviewed to produce an aid to standardisation of care in wound care. These documents were launched at the conference and are a valuable resource for health professionals who may be less experienced in all aspects of wound care, since they offer a guide to best practice.

A great addition to the conference was *WUWHS Daily*, a newspaper produced every day by a talented team at *Journal of Wound Care (JWC)*, which provided a detailed timetable and information about each day's programme of presentations, workshops, and exhibition events. The *Daily* also had insights into the previous day's events, interviews with the speakers and valuable feedback and photos from attendees—it was interesting to see other people's opinions.

During a glorious evening in Abu Dhabi in the beautiful surroundings of the emirate state, *JWC* hosted a wonderful gala dinner and awards ceremony, in conjunction with the WUWHS. The awards recognise wound care excellence, research, and innovation in 14 different categories for healthcare and industry colleagues. Listening to the nominations and the achievements of those awarded first, second and third prizes, it is apparent that these are highly esteemed internationally. The evening host for the event was a wonderful local comedian, who managed to keep everyone entertained and even amazed himself with being able to pronounce all the medical terminology needed for the nominations!

The conference closing ceremony is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the



Anthony Kerr, MD MA Healthcare (L) and Ellie Lindsay OBE (R) at the *Journal of Wound Care* awards ceremony in Abu Dhabi

successes of each WUWHS meeting, as well as hand over the baton to the next hosting country. This appears to be a well contested competition with lots of attention to detail going into final presentations to the WUWHS committee from nominated countries. For 2026 the conference was awarded to Malaysia.

The final ceremony also provides a platform to recognise those health professionals who have dedicated their working lives to excellence and

commitment to the field of wound care and patient experience. Attending this year's conference, I felt very privileged to witness the founder and Trustee of LLCE, Ellie Lindsay OBE, be awarded a Life-time Achievement award for her exceptional work. Such a well deserved award to an amazing lady who has dedicated her life to the improving outcomes of those with lower limb conditions and patient advocate. A memorable end to a highly enjoyable conference. **BJN**

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