Moving forward: a general overview within the Leg Club® community

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As we enter 2023, many of us have started making well-intentional improved lifestyle declarations such as 'dry January'—setting aside the wine until February—and of course, the much-proclaimed diet! However, having struggled over past years to maintain my lifestyle declarations that sadly had a habit of lasting less than a week, I have chosen to completely abandon the well-meaning resolutions. Instead, I have elected to start this January by reflecting on how the past 12 months have been, both personally and professionally, while acknowledging the extremely positive, intermingled with some negatives, and moving forward by building on what was good and what can be improved!

The past 12 months certainly were an extremely industrious year for the Leg Club Foundation. The Foundation, along with the unfailing support of the Leg Club Industry Partners (LCIP), have been able to collaboratively create and distribute information leaflets on preventative health and general advice, in electronic (https://www.legclub.org/information-leaflets) and hard copy format, to both clinical teams and the public. In fact, these months have been tremendously important for the Leg Club Foundation as it continues to adapt to support the steady increase of the psychosocial Leg Club model for lower limb care, as well as provide education and research on the impact of leg health and treatment within the Leg Club social model.

Throughout 2022, and especially in this post-COVID era, I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that each Leg Club team (clinical and volunteers) have been inspirational and have achieved so much in helping people reintegrate socially, consequently improving their members' quality of life.

Going forward into 2023!

Throughout 2023, the Leg Club Foundation board will continue to profile the model and work with organisations to establish new Leg Clubs whilst providing support and advice for clinicians, volunteers, our Leg Club members and beyond. Our role is to ensure that the resourcefulness and uniqueness of our charity remains person-centred, working in partnership with volunteers, members, communities, clinicians, opinion leaders, research bodies and LCIPs. It is through these partnerships that we aim to raise awareness on all aspects of preventative management and public health promotion in leg health. Several Leg Club papers are being planned for publication in wound care journals during the year. Fellow trustee Dr Neil McIntyre has collated data from the Leg Clubs incorporate 'Well Leg regime', investigating the benefits of providing ongoing support and maintenance of healthy legs, offering positive health beliefs and a broad scale of education and health promotion. The international paper is in the final stages, and we aim to publish the findings in March.

The annual medical technology Parliamentary showcase: addressing long-term conditions

The Medical Technology Group (MTG) is a coalition of patient groups, research charities and medical device manufacturers launched in 2000 to make medical technologies available to everyone who needs them. The annual MTG Awareness Week reception at the House of Commons is a rare opportunity

Figure 1. Dr Anna Galazka and Mr Frazer Brown at the annual medical technology Parliamentary showcase.

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to bring together members of parliament (MPs) and NHS leaders to discuss the ways in which medical technology can benefit the NHS. The MTG works towards achieving a cutting-edge NHS, where patients are guaranteed access to effective medical technologies. This is especially relevant today as the UK is currently facing daily-life pressures due to the rising numbers of elderly people, with the majority of this population experiencing living with long-term conditions. These changes in the UK population will increase pressures upon already stretched health and social care budgets. Wound care is one such area that will increase in prominence as the UK population ages, as the prevalence of many chronic wounds increases with age. Hence, one of the three topics addressed at the 2022 Medical Technology Group meeting in the House of Commons Terrace Pavilion looked at long-term conditions, which is very relevant to the psychosocial Leg Club model for lower limb care.

As the Leg Club Foundation represents its members (patients) as an affiliate of the MTG, we had an exhibition stand to display the Leg Club portfolio of materials and disseminate work done by the Foundation. Our external project consultants, Dr Anna Galazka and Mr Frazer Brown, represented Professor Ellie Lindsay OBE at the December 2022 MTG meeting, which focused on the power of medical technology to help with the three key areas of future-proofing the NHS: reduction of surgical waiting times, dealing with workforce crisis and improving patient care for long-term conditions (*Figure 1*). Leg Clubs can tap into the power of technology to enhance members' experiences, care and their health-related quality of life by improving communication, transparency and dissemination of health-related information.

Dr Anna Galazka spoke to delegates about the findings from her recent study into Leg Clubs volunteers' attitudes to digital technology, which pointed to a growing interest among volunteers, members and their family support networks, in the adoption of innovative technical solutions. Her findings connect with one of the key messages from the meeting, which is that patient focus in implementing medical technology should include family and friends, who might guide and support the digitally anxious in their digital journeys. For more information about the work of the MTG, please visit: www.mtg.org.uk or www.legclub.org.

Figure 2. Barbara Herpham, MTG Chair introducing speakers and the importance of empowering individuals to regain control of their lives during recovery.

On 5 December 2022, NHS leaders, MPs and patients met at the Parliament reception to discuss ways to increase access to medical technology to improve the NHS's future provision of healthcare. Ending variation, patient representation on decision-making bodies and improving the adoption of innovation were all key themes that emerged during the event attended by dozens of parliamentarians, NHS leaders and patients.

The reception also heard how such technology and innovation has played a pivotal role in helping the NHS cope during the pandemic, with Dr Vin Diwakar, Medical Director for Transformation from NHS England commenting on how some hospitals have discovered the benefits of previously unused technology in order to cope with the unprecedented pressure of the pandemic.

The collection of data to support the uptake of such technology also emerged as a key theme, with Simon Bolton of NHS Digital explaining the ways in which greater use of data is emerging as a key factor for the adoption of innovation.

Two patient speakers, Dave Bracher and Mick Crozier, also spoke movingly about how technology has allowed them to regain control of their lives as they recover from and live with their respective conditions (*Figure 2*). Mr Crozier described himself as 'one of the lucky ones' with regards to access to his treatment, referring to the ongoing problem of regional variation in access to innovation in the NHS.

Looking forward to 2023, the MTG promised to continue its work with its Ration Watch campaign (https://www.legclub.org/ration-watch) by highlighting best practice across the NHS in backlog recovery, workforce initiatives and patient access to medical technology.

MPs also pledged their support, with co-host Rachael Maskell MP reiterating the ongoing work of the Health and Social Care Committee to look into the importance of digital and medical technology for the future of the NHS.

Global Vein Week: addressing the reality of venous and vascular disease

Lower limb management is a distressing condition that involves several challenges, as many people with leg ulcers are elderly, vulnerable, financially disadvantaged and alone, and treatment forms a large part of a practitioner's workload. In addition, health is a basic human right and it is fundamental for the developmental aspects of social health, which is increasingly being acknowledged as a vital element of healthcare development and wellbeing. Meeting the clinical and psychosocial needs of individuals with chronic lower limb-related problems and leg ulceration is challenging and the growing prevalence of venous leg ulcers in an ageing population presents further challenges for wound care and management, as often, these individuals are

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socially isolated and have little or no peer support.

The importance of having a working productive relationship with societies involved in venous disease is critical and will ultimately lead to improved outcomes. Hence, the Leg Club model has always been affiliated with national and international societies that have a similar aim, one example being the v-WIN Foundation. The partnership with v-WIN has enabled the Leg Club community to work on an annual global project to raise awareness and improve prevention of venous and lymphatic health-related issues. The Leg Club Foundation supports the international vWIN Vein Week, which is held in April as part of World Health week.

The organisation and programme content of the international vWIN Vein Week, under the direction of Professor Sergio Gianesini, is a unique event in the global Wound Care calendar, bringing multidisciplinary specialists and the public together. The International Leg Club committee (ILCC) are currently working on this year's conVEINsation programme as part of the vWIN Foundation global campaign, aiming to highlight the need for effective, accessible and safe therapies for venous or vascular disease, and address the impact of social isolation. As in previous years, the ILCC are reaching out to our international Leg Club members, communities, volunteers, friends, patient organisations and the LCIP members to join in and support the vWIN Foundation again this year. To compliment the global message of v-WIN and World Health Week, it is also important to raise awareness on lower limb problems amongst UK parliamentarians, and the ILCC are already in the embryonic stage of producing topics for another conVEINsation week of programmes. To complement this, Roland Renyi and

Figure 3. First 2023 meeting with our Leg Club industry Partners (LCIPs), combined with virtual LCIP members, certainly set the scene for this year, with a number of upcoming collaborative projects.

Professor Ellie Lindsay OBE are holding a reception at the House of Commons in conjunction with FINN Partners, one of the world's largest independent communication agencies dedicated to helping people live healthier lives and creating healthier communities. The reception, entitled 'Shining a light on a hidden problem,' will be attended by MPs, third sector organisations involved with long-term conditions, leaders in the wound care community and members of the healthcare industries. Together, we will challenge the disparities we see in our ageing society. Many MPs may not be fully aware of these conditions, but their effects will be keenly felt by many of their constituents and their families. Thus, it is our intention to use this event as the launch of a manifesto calling for immediate action to tackle the hidden problem of leg ulcers and lower limb conditions.

Leg Club Industry Partners' board meeting

The Leg Club social model of care attempts to address the broader influences on health, social, cultural, environmental and economic factors, as opposed to just disease and injury. Lower limb conditions present several challenges to the individual, such as physical and emotional distress, lack of self-esteem, depression, self-neglect, social isolation and loss of income, all of which are frequently associated with leg ulcers. As chair of the LCIP, I am constantly amazed by the LCIP board's motivation and commitment to address the many issues that individuals and their families may be confronted with. As a working group, their creativity is amazing, and at this year's first quarterly combined live/virtual meeting, their 'thinking caps' were on and projects have come about to produce a range of excellent and accessible public health information over the coming months (*Figure 3*). Our industry partners have often taken a back seat when it comes to recognition, but I want

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to highlight the fantastic support that they provide, as seeing our partners work together with one common direction and vision throughout the years has been inspirational. Continued working relationships between the Foundation and industry are critical for future developments of care that ultimately lead to improved patient outcomes. It is vital that these interactions are transparent and fortunately, there are existing frameworks within which the Foundation, practitioners and the industry can work to ensure that all legal, moral and accountability issues are addressed. Above all, partnership gives the opportunity to generate goodwill and promotes positive perceptions with nurses and communities. This year promises more of the same, which is very exciting, so a sincere 'Thank You' to our LCIP members for working together so effectively and helping us to maintain our mission, our integrity, and our success! CWC

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