Having a voice and raising the profile of lower limb healthcare!

Health Secretary reiterates commitment to medical technology at MTG reception

The Leg Club Foundation is a pioneering charity created to reflect all aspects of lower limb-related conditions and their management. As a third-sector, not-for-profit organisation, the foundation consistently strives to ensure the charity remains person centred and directed at the heart of care delivery. The Medical Technology Group (MTG) addresses this by providing a forum for patient representatives to discuss their needs directly with medical technology manufacturers and third-sector charities, which helps keep the individuals' views at the forefront of development. Once again, the Leg Club Foundation and guests were privileged to participate in the annual MTG Parliamentary Showcase. Representatives for the Leg Clubs included volunteers, clinicians, board members and an in-house designer. We were also delighted to be joined by our patron, Baroness Masham.

The invited speakers were inspirational, and the last speaker, Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock, explained how the Government is committed to ensuring that patients benefit from the best medical technology available.

Speaking at the MTG's annual reception in the Houses of Parliament in December 2018, Mr Hancock said he was focused on three key factors to ensure that safe, appropriate new technology is adopted by the NHS: facilitating uptake of technology, creating the right culture to embrace innovation and ensuring the health service employs the right people to make the integration of new technology possible.

Over 150 MPs, peers, clinicians, health professionals, patients and carers made the journey from across the country to attend the event to mark Medical Technology Week 2018 on the prestigious terrace at the House of Commons.

The annual event highlights the value that medical technology gives patients by improving their quality of life, to the NHS by ensuring efficiency and cost savings, and to society by returning people to work and helping them lead a normal life. This year, as well as a keynote speech from the Secretary of State, guests heard clinicians and patients recount their personal experiences of how medical technology benefits lives.

MTG Chair Barbara Harpham, marking her tenth year in the role, spoke passionately about the issue of rationing of treatments, which has led to a 'deeply concerning' postcode

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Figure 1. Leg Club representatives and guests at MTG meeting

lottery. At a roundtable discussion earlier in the day that was attended by representatives of NICE and HealthWatch, she spoke about a situation where the availability of treatments such as hip and knee replacements, hernia operations and cataract surgery depends not on patients' needs but by where they live.

To highlight the issue, the MTG is preparing for the launch of a new campaign called RationWatch, which will gather evidence of clinical commissioning groups restricting access to treatments based on arbitrary constraints and thresholds, which often contradict national guidelines.

RationWatch will collect data as well as individual patient stories to draw attention to the issue and call for

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action to address the problem. The MTG is an influential organisation, and the Leg Club Foundation is an active participant representing its members within patient groups. For more information about the work of the MTG, please visit its website: www.mtg.org.uk.

Taking the leg ulcer fight to Parliament

Medical technology in wound management is continually evolving, and there are currently new and progressing ways in which problems of the lower limb and leg ulcers can be managed. However, an entrepreneurial approach to wound management relies on clinicians working collaboratively to ensure that standards, improvement in quality of wound management and wellbeing are a high priority.

Determined to get better recognition for the plight of patients with venous leg ulcers, members and patients of the Whiteley Clinic and Leg Ulcer Charity joined Ellie Lindsay of the Lindsay Leg Clubs in Parliament.

On 4 December 2018, Vicki Smith, Director at the Whiteley Clinic and Leg Ulcer Charity, joined Ellie Lindsay at the MTG meeting held in the House of Commons. Ellie Lindsay promoted the social model of care that her Lindsay Leg Clubs provide.

Supplied by authors

Figure 2. Vicki Smith (right) and Ellie Lindsay

The following day, Janet Cassie and James Turpin (patients with leg ulcers cured using the Whiteley Protocol), accompanied by Barrie Price (consultant surgeon and trustee at the Leg Ulcer Charity) and Susan Ostler (lead nurse at the Whiteley Clinic), attended the Vascular and Venous All-Party Parliamentary Group. This is chaired by Derek Thomas, MP for St Ives.

Janet and James were able to explain their own experiences and how they were only cured when treated at the Whiteley Clinic. Both underwent endovenous surgery with local anaesthetic under the Whiteley Protocol and were cured.

Mr Thomas was given a copy of the book *Leg Ulcer Treatment Revolution*. We can only hope this interaction helps improve treatment in the UK for all patients with venous disease.

New book points to leg ulcer cure

For centuries, venous leg ulcers have been treated as 'open sores'. Nurses, and some doctors, have specialised in dressings and compression bandaging to help these heal. However, once healed, they almost always recur.

Since the 1990s, researchers have known that most venous leg ulcers can be cured permanently by endovenous surgery under local anaesthetic (Howard et al, 2008)—exactly what the Whiteley Clinic specialises in.

The Whiteley Clinic has cured 85% of its patients with venous leg ulcer, and 52% do not even need compression stockings in the future. Not surprisingly, curing a leg ulcer is not only better for the patient, it even saves money. The UK spends £2–3 billion per year on leg ulcer dressings (Guest et al, 2017), which would not be needed if all patients received proper assessment and treatment.

In November 2018, Prof Mark Whiteley wrote a book explaining this. *Leg Ulcer Treatment Revolution* is written in simple English and has over 45 diagrams to help patients and carers understand how leg ulcers can now be cured.

Highlighting two patients who are currently suing their doctors and nurses for not referring them for endovenous surgery, *Leg Ulcer Treatment Revolution* is essential reading for anyone with an interest in venous leg ulcers—whether a patient, carer or healthcare professional.

Acknowledgement

The Leg Club Foundation now works in partnership with Prof Whiteley, founder of the College of Phlebology (https://www.collegeofphlebology.com/), aiming to provide education, evidence-based treatment and care to improve the quality of life of individuals with chronic lower limb conditions. The Leg Club Foundation embraces endovenous surgery as a cost-effective surgical cure for ulcers that complements the proven benefits of the Leg Clubs, which tackle social isolation through education and holistic care. **CWC**

Guest J, Fuller G, Vowden P. Venous leg ulcer management in clinical practice in the UK: costs and outcomes. Int Wound J. 2017; 15(1):29–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/iwj.12814

Howard DP, Howard A, Kothari A, Wales L, Guest M, Davies AH. The role of superficial venous surgery in the management of venous ulcers: a systematic review. Eur J Vasc Endovasc Surg. 2008; 36(4):458–465. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejvs.2008.06.013

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