

# Person-centred wound care — reflections from the 2019 EWMA conference



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Every 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 involvement with the LLC. Continuous professional development is high on the agenda for the LLC to ensure that as healthcare professionals we are aware of new technologies and innovations to health, driving a quality safe service to the populations we serve.

For the last two years, I have worked collaboratively with partners from across the Healthcare Economy in Leeds to establish a Leg Club in Otley, West Yorkshire. For my roles as IPC Consultant and Trustee for the LLC Foundation and Lead Infection Prevention Nurse for Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, it has been valuable to experience first-hand the trials and tribulations that occur when trying to set up a Leg Club. The warmth that you feel from spending time at a Leg Club is overwhelming; making the difficulties around staffing and general logistics feel insignificant in comparison to the greater good. The laughter you hear, the smiles you see, the relief when people realise it isn't just them who 'suffer in silence' with a lower limb wound problem, naturally filled me with professional pride, joy and happiness.

## APPLYING FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP

As part of my continued professional development, I applied for the scholarship for a second year running, and was delighted to hear I was selected by the international judges as the winner to attend one of the largest international wound conferences. EWMA 2019 was to be held in Gothenburg, on the west coast of Sweden, known for its Dutch-style canals, leafy boulevards and 'Räksmörgås' — open prawn sandwiches.

Delegates from all over Europe attended the EWMA Conference, alongside speakers from across the globe, who shared their expertise through interesting presentations and thought-provoking research. Whilst the conference is the

largest international wound care gathering, it still has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, allowing delegates and industry to network effectively during their stay. I particularly enjoyed meeting people from other countries and cultures with different care systems in place.

## THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE MOTTO

The theme of this year's conference was 'Person-Centred Wound Care', something we often seem to take for granted. Reflecting on the conference's motto made me question why for clinicians it isn't always an integral part of care provision. There was an emphasis from many speakers about it being pivotal to care delivery, in that we understand the patients' needs and wishes throughout their healthcare journey to optimise recovery and aid their wellbeing. The theme resonated with the LLC unique model that is based on the provision of community-based care and provides a supportive environment for patient education, advice and information. It is recognised that through de-stigmatising patients and involving them in their care — a person-centred approach — Leg Clubs have achieved notable success by improving overall healing rates and preventing ulcer recurrence.

## ENGAGING WITH MY INTERESTS

There was a wide variety of sessions from prevention and management of wounds, to epidemiology, pathology and diagnosis. I decided to tailor my programme based on my interests and professional background in infection prevention. Bacteria were one of the earliest life forms to appear on Earth over 3.8 billion years ago, and have continued to evolve as highly adaptable organisms, capable of surviving in extreme conditions. They are able to produce exopolymeric substances, which provides them with a protection to the outside world, so that they can form what is known as biofilm. In line with this, we have also seen the emergence of antibiotic resistance and it is only in recent years that the true consequences of this have been realised. Antibiotic resistance

and biofilms have impacted on the therapies we have available for our patients and for them to work most effectively on chronic wounds.

### FINDING OUT WHAT'S ON THE MARKET

There was plenty of opportunity to explore the exhibition stands to view wound care products, compression devices and a variety of other health aids. It was interesting to learn about products on the market that can be used to treat lower limb problems; many of which as an IPC specialist I was not familiar with. It gave me the opportunity to look closely at a new, small and efficient Doppler machine, one we already have in use in Otley, and experience first-hand how the improved technology can speed up assessment and improve patient care.

The NHS Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019) embraces new ways of working, new technologies and digital improvements that can help patients stay and be cared for longer in the community. It reinforces the emphasis of giving people control over their health and the care they receive, and encourages collaborative working with partners across the healthcare economies. Many of the new technologies at EWMA were about preventative methods, improving earlier detection, and treating wounds more efficiently. As an IPC specialist, I was keen to hear about new technologies and research that is being conducted, and one area of interest is silver-resistant bacteria in chronic wounds and the challenges it poses. It was also a good opportunity to learn more about the basics of wound prevention and treatment, and why there is a need for new technologies in areas such as pressure ulcer detection. In terms of early detection, we saw an imaging system which can be used to speed up the clinical assessment of wounds and, through the use of fluorescence, can guide the practitioner to the most appropriate treatment required and can be a support tool to reduce the burden of infection. It is recognised that chronic non-healing wounds present a substantial economic burden to the NHS, and more importantly to the person affected. Significant reductions in quality of life occur for those



A lecture by Aurora Piaggese who gathered patients and clinicians' views and voices from six European countries

affected, and often precede serious events such as limb amputations or even premature deaths.

### CAPTURING PATIENTS' VOICES

One EWMA project around 'Patients with Chronic Wounds', which was made into a video, illustrated patient stories from a number of European countries, highlighting their experiences through interviews with the patient and the healthcare workers who provided their care. The project echoed the theme of the conference 'Person-Centred Wound Care' as it talked about patient perceptions, their life before and after their wounds, domestic and sexual difficulties, their perception on the future and areas of improvement in wound care. It highlighted the importance of engaging patients in national and international healthcare policies as patients are no longer seen as mere consumers and passive recipients of healthcare.

Attending the EWMA conference has been invaluable in many ways and enabled me to evaluate the latest clinical pathways and wound care products, as well as learn about new technologies that may support the way forward for the NHS. I would like to thank the LLC Foundation® and their Industry Partners for my scholarship, which has provided me with an amazing opportunity to attend this conference fully and be part of an international agenda on wound care.

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### REFERENCE

NHS (2019) *The NHS Long Term Plan*. Available at: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/> (accessed 1.09.2019)