Reflection: patients' experiences of being treated in a Leg Club setting

Abdul M Seckam, PhD

Patient experiences with wound care treatment are being recognised as central to prudent care. Leg Clubs provide community-based treatment, education and ongoing health promotion and care for people with leg-related problems. This article considers the growing evidence of patients' experiences of being treated in a Leg Club setting. Six participants from a Leg Club setting were interviewed via a semi-structured interview, and interviews were transcribed verbatim and investigated for themes using interpretative phenomenological analysis in accordance to Smith et al (2009). An overarching theme, the holistic approach to treatment, was identified, with two subthemes: Leg Club education and a sense of autonomy and trust in Leg Club staff. This study revealed the importance of a holistic approach to treatment within a Leg Club setting, and adds to, and complements, the body of evidence.

KEYWORDS:
■ Leg Club ■ Holistic wound care ■ Patient experience

The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation is a charity that cares for patients suffering from leg ulcers. The debilitating effects of leg ulcers may lead to various psychological and social implications. Additionally, the impact of leg ulcers has financial implications on patients, their family and the NHS. There is a growing body of evidence to support the effectiveness of members being treated in a Leg Club setting (*Table 1*).

Participating in Leg Club allows the patient to be involved with their care and treatment. Lindsay (1996) recorded the first ethnographic patient story. This story relates to how the Leg Club and its team helped a patient become compliant with treatment, thus empowering the patient in the management and treatment of their wound. Other stories highlight the positive relationships between nurses and patients. (Hawkins, 2003; Foster and Hawkins, 2005).

Importantly, the Leg Club model (*Figure 1*) provides the opportunity for patients and staff members to articulate their experience.

Various authors have also suggested the importance of patient stories (Lindsay, 1996; Kutchins and Kirk, 1997; Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Hawkins and Lindsay, 2006; Smith et al, 2009) in line with prudent care.

In addition, qualitative evidence has positive implications in medical research (Reid et al, 2005), and is being recognised in informing decision-makers about the use of therapeutic interventions (Dixon-Woods and Fitzpatrick, 2001). Worley (2004) suggested that patient experiences provide valuable information for clinicians, leading to effective care, and Reid et al (2005) suggested that these experiences may play a role in the context of NHS frameworks.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

In an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study undertaken by Seckam (2016) on the lived experiences of using medical grade honey to treat wounds, an unexpected theme with two subthemes was identified, as highlighted in *Figure 2*. The findings detailed below are part of a PhD dissertation (Seckam, 2016; Seckam and Mercer, 2018).

IMPORTANCE OF A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TREATMENT

As highlighted in the analysis of

Table 1: Benefits of Leg Clubs: a growing body of evidence

Benefits of the Lindsay Leg Club model in practice
Healing rates are excellent and recurrence of leg ulcers is reduced (Vowden and Vowden, 2006; Lindsay, 2010; Clarke and Lindsay, 2013)
Cost- and time-effective (Lindsay, 2010; Clarke and Lindsay, 2013; Lindsay, 2017)
Patients benefit from social interaction and wellbeing (Edwards et al, 2009; Clarke, 2010; Upton et al, 2014; Upton et al, 2015)
General practitioner input is kept to a minimum (Lindsay, 2010)
General practice nurse input is reduced (Lindsay, 2010)
Falling rates of inappropriate referrals and antibiotic prescribing (Lindsay, 2010)

Abdul M Seckam PhD, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff School of Health Sciences, Western Avenue, Llandaff, Cardiff
aseckam@cardiffmet.ac.uk

the participants' transcripts, Leg Club staff administered a holistic approach to members' wound care treatment. The importance of a holistic approach to treatment was identified as the main theme, with two subthemes identified under this.

Subtheme one: Leg Club education and a sense of autonomy

Analysis of members' transcripts highlighted the education they received during their Leg Club treatment, which allowed the participants to feel autonomous. Participant one commented on being educated on honey treatment:

> *I haven't heard of honey being used… until I came to the Leg Club.*

Participant two, also discussed the various options available, therefore, illustrating the importance of the Leg Club staff education and empowerment:

> *The options were there for me to use and they had several options, which you could see being used all round the room with different people.*

Leg Club members also spoke with staff, volunteers and other members, thus providing a sense of empowerment. Members also commented on the support provided by staff and nurses. Participant three explained:

> [The nurse said]… *they're starting to use that* [honey] *now, and then she started to use it, like. And it did make a difference… I've read it in the newspaper about this, er, Manuka honey, because my daughter got online like and… and got all the information about it.*

The education, empowerment and nurses allowing members to become involved in their treatment regime provided a sense of autonomy, thus adding to a more holistic approach to wound care in line with the Leg Club model and prudent care.

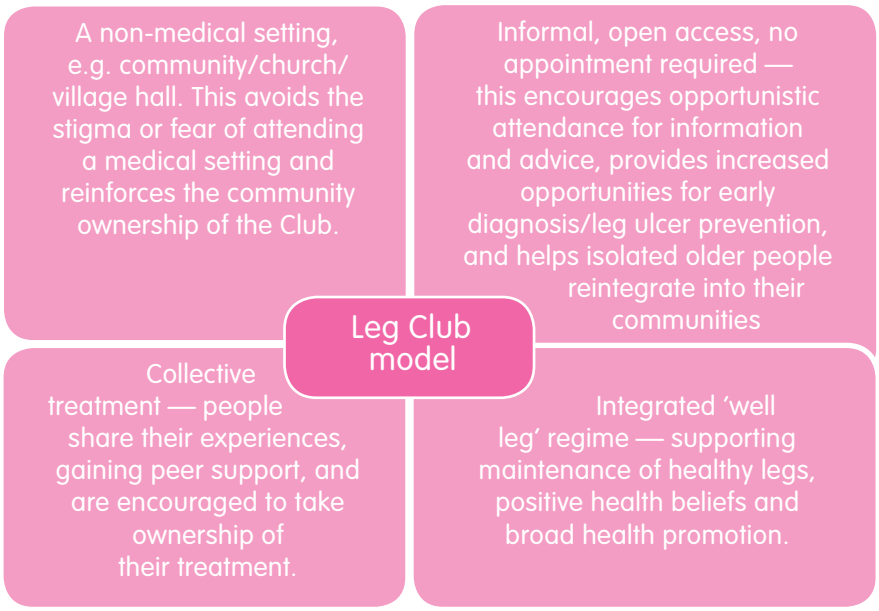

Figure 1.
The Leg Club model (Lindsay, 2010).

Subtheme two: trust in Leg Club staff

Leg Club members' trust in staff was important, as the nurses suggested a suitable dressing, which helped heal their wound successfully. Participants were grateful and trusted in the Leg Club staff and the care they provided, as evidenced in the extract below:

> *Leg Club, as such, that was more of a revelation to me… I was so grateful for those girls being there and coming to see me every day and change the bandages because they were just so… so wet and horrible and yucky, and you don't realise what treasures you know...*

Participant two commented on the trust in, and appreciation for, the Leg Club nurses in their wound care, comparing them to 'treasures'. Participant one further explains:

> *I say the nurses know best what might work for you and* [laughs]… *it depends on their training I should imagine now, they have alternative medication to suggest for patients and er I suppose I go along with that.*

FINAL THOUGHTS

The evidence and importance of patient stories in holistic wound care is growing. This approach administered by the Leg Club has been evidenced in the participants' reflections, which provide an insight into the experiences of education, empowerment, autonomy, trust

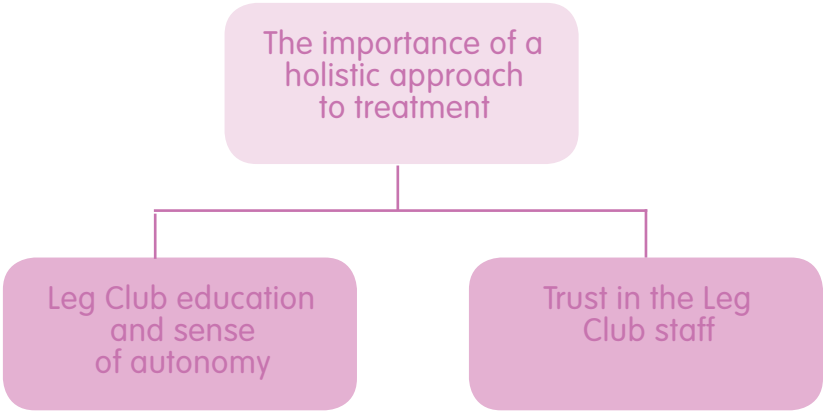

Figure 2.
The key theme and two subthemes, as identified in Seckam (2016).

in Leg Club staff and successful healing, adding to previous research outlined in *Table 1*. This parallels previous research by Lindsay (1996), Kutchins and Kirk (1997), Brocki and Wearden (2006), Hawkins and Lindsay, (2006), Vowden and Vowden (2006), Smith et al (2009), Lindsay (2010), Clarke and Lindsay (2013).

Moreover, the reliable and high quality care received among these members by the Leg Club staff was emphasised, and studies have shown that such practices enhance patient compliance and concordance, thus resulting in better healing outcomes (Greenfield et al, 1988; Hawkins, 2003; Foster and Hawkins, 2005).

The evidence (*Table 1*) and experiences demonstrated here offer valuable information for future research and to help inform service improvement programmes. This can help mould and shape decisions made by organisations such as the NHS and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Finally, these first-hand patient experiences are important as they enable wound care specialists to develop an informed and proactive way of educating, empowering and recommending wound care treatment to address the needs of those with leg ulcers.

This article highlights the importance of a holistic approach to wound care among patients being treated in a social setting: a Leg Club. Perhaps in the future this model can be adopted and employed for various medical conditions. While there is a growing body of evidence to support being treated in such settings, more research remains to be undertaken, both nationally and internationally. JCN

KEY POINTS

- The Leg Club model provides the opportunity for patients to be involved with their care and treatment.
- Analysis of patient experiences highlighted the positive effects of a holistic approach to wound care.
- Treatment in Leg Clubs enables education and feelings of empowerment and trust.
- Patient experiences are important to informing prudent healthcare practices.

Practice point

Leg Clubs offer a non-medical social environment in which to provide nursing care. In turn, this removes any stigma associated with leg ulcers and allows isolated elderly patients to mix with others, which improves concordance and promotes healing.

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