Is the COVID-19 vaccine a road to liberation?

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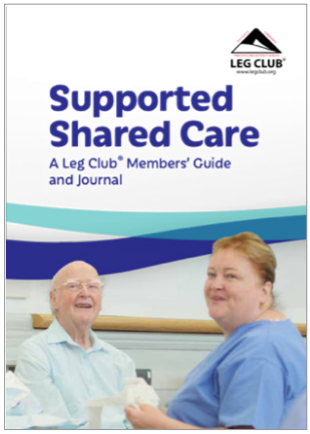

Since the start of the new year the world sadly continues to witness there are no global barriers to highly contagious diseases, as again we observe new worldwide challenges, curfews and imposed constraints placed upon society. Regardless of age, current events have drastically changed our daily lives due to the rapidly changing measures against the new variants of COVID-19 has impacted worldwide.

With the advent of a pandemic in an ageing society, where the young no longer outnumber the old, this has become a serious issue regarding the categorisation of priority groups for vaccines to be administer. I have always resisted classifying myself in the seniors' group yet according to the World Health Organization (WHO) most developed countries have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of an elderly or older person.

However, as one tries to always look on the bright side of life being within the governments age and vulnerability grouping tier placed me fairly high on the eligibility list for the Covid-19 vaccine. Interestingly in the media recently there were discussions on the anti-vaccine movement along with a general debate on safety and reliability of the vaccine, this led me to reflect on my childhood assembling in line outside a hall waiting to be called for the highly effective smallpox vaccine (developed in1796) responsible to date for worldwide eradication of smallpox to be administered. Also, I pondered on how vaccines have advanced over centuries changing the course of history relating to global epidemics and lives of individuals and their loved ones who in the nineties for example encountered Polio, Diphtheria and TB to name a few.

On receiving my vaccination appointment, I duly attended my GP surgery and was extremely impressed at the operational vaccine process the team at the surgery had organised and everyone waiting in the freezing cold were positive and just pleased to be attending with a view to hopefully getting out and about again! Alongside many of my friends and colleagues being optimistic it will enable us hopefully to return to some form of liberation, normality and the experience of much missed international travel, conference and exhibition networking again!

IMPACT OF COVID-19 WITHIN THE LEG CLUB® NETWORK

Regrettably, we remain with social distancing measures imposed by the government, requiring people to continue to adhere to the recommendations by maintaining a physical distance between people and reducing the number of times people come into close contact with each other. Leg Clubs are, in essence, a face-to-face service where social relationships are formed between persons in physical proximity to one another. Hence, for many Leg Clubs, the coronavirus restrictions meant that Clubs that had reopened have since had to revert back either suspending their operations or significantly changing their operational policies in order to adhere to National Health Service directives during the COVID-19 crisis. This provided motivated teams with a new smarter, innovative way towards a cultural change being undertaken within the Leg Club network, with signs of a growing online Leg Club community with remote consultations for their members requiring lower limb support. Many selected Leg Club members (patients) with both clinical and family encouragement became digitally minded enabling members to actively participate in a virtual supported shared care pathway journal. Also, a creation of Leg Club 'Tips' on how to take a photo of wounds, maintain skin hydration and the importance of exercise are some examples that were created.

For more information visit: https://www.legclub.org/easy-reading-tips-and-guidance

CONSTRUCTIVE THINKING?

Lack of understanding relating to aspects of social media and virtual technology has always been a huge challenge for me over the years but never really impacted upon my everyday life, however, that all came to an end at the beginning of 2020 with the apperance of COVID-19. Imposed lockdown and travel

restrictions meant I was unable to travel, work and network with my friends and colleagues and, as with many colleagues, this had an enormous professional impact on me as I became more aware then ever of the effect being isolated had on creativity and communication. Also, the emotions one experienced from being unexpectedly removed from social groups, friends and loved ones, creating a deep emotion of loneliness and lack of interactive and intellectual stimulus, could so easily have led to withdrawal from society.

When one is working from home isolated from fellow professional colleagues it's important to foster creativity and undertake new challenges. Hence, more than ever, it was extremely important for one to move on from the status quo, to learn something new and positively explore and seek new ways of feeling engaged, useful, productive and content. Due to new ways of virtual conferences and group meetings, a necessary key to my personal wellbeing was to confront the lack of knowledge and understanding in this modern technological age. For me positive thinking can't be understated as it is an emotional and mental attitude that makes one focus on what is appropriate and will bring about benefits hence learning to embrace the challenge of technology was a way forward for me. New projects were embarked upon involving a media platform relating to webinars and interactive communication were duly undertaken with great gusto. By challenging myself to undertake new learning skills, was a valuable and enjoyable activity. Through using YouTube tutorials, I soon rediscovered the importance of self-discipline and tenacity and the rewards of productive outcomes. While accepting that I am still a novice by embarking on learning new skills in today's technological world it has given me a sense of achievement and immense satisfaction!

The importance of raising public awareness of lower limb and foot problems

The accomplishment of the 2020 Legs Matter campaign in a virtual format was a huge success story, both with the public and NHS. Once again, the evaluation and feedback highlighted a greater need for more public awareness and education. As professionals, we should ensure those in our care and their families have sufficient transparent information to enable them to understand the important role of prevention and/or what to expect relating to their treatment pathway and navigating them to appropriate specialist services. Preparation is already in motion for the 2021 Legs Matter Awareness week being held later this year and the coalition is strategically planning with great commitment, ensuring another successful campaign. For more information visit: www.legclub.org and www.legsmatter.org

Individuals receiving lower limb venous/lymphatic care have multifactorial needs related to their physical, mental and social health. Part of the Leg Club ethos is to raise public awareness hence a Leg Club international committee to support the humanitarian vWIN Foundation not for profit Vein Week was created. The committee are actively supporting the vWIN Vein Week regarding knowledge of venous disease and the importance of early referrals in a coordinated approach through partnerships with the vWIN Foundation and other key stakeholders at an international level.

This collaboration seeks to raise global awareness and improve current knowledge and raise the profile of venous and lymphatic health related problems by supporting the international Health Awareness week held in April 2021. The international multidisciplinary committee within the Leg Club network consist of consultants, academics, sport therapist, non-medical colleagues and third sector organisations committed to advance world understanding of lower limb related subjects.

More information on the work of the vWIN

SUPPORT US

The world is going through a very difficult time right now and charities need your support. To support The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation, please visit this website: https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?charityId=1001744

Foundation is available at the following link: info@vwinfoundation.com

The 2021 annual Leg Club conference

Due to the 2020 being cancelled and subject to the world returning to some form of normality the belated conference and volunteer awards and subject to government edit will optimistically take place on September 29–30 2021.

As always, the highlight of the two-day conference and dinner is the annual Leg Club Volunteers Awards. Their enthusiasm, creativity and boundless energy are evident as in this COVID-19 era many quickly adapted to looking at alternative ways of supporting their Leg Club members and clinical teams since March 2020, and they are the backbone of the social model and the Leg Club. The awards exist to highlight and celebrate this outstanding group of people whose sterling work keeps the Leg Clubs thriving and do so with no reward or personal gain. Their enthusiasm, creativity and boundless energy are evident as many quickly adapted to looking at alternative ways of supporting their Leg Club members and clinical teams since March 2020 and they are the backbone of the social model and the Leg Club.

As I end this update, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all who kindly purchased the Leg Club Favourites Recipe book making it such an amazing international success. As some of you may be aware, the Leg Club Favourites charity recipe book was created during lockdown and celebrates our connection with others through the joy of food. It contains contributions from NHS and international health professionals, volunteers, members and friends of Leg Clubs across the UK and further afield. It is the result of socially-distanced community spirit and support, which has been so important during these difficult times. Also, I was amazed at the international and intergenerational response from friends and families, who kindly shared their favourite recipes which enabled me to create the recipe book as a fundraising venture for the Leg Club Foundation charity with all proceeds from the sale of the cookbook being 100% donated to the Leg Club Foundation. WUK