Best Foot Forward Leg Club—coping with COVID-19 restrictions on care

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Mrs PW is an 89-year-old woman who, in December 2020, sustained a traumatic wound to her right shin when she knocked her leg on the metal bar of a recliner chair. Since then, she was seen in the GP surgery by practice nurses twice weekly until February 2021.

In January 2021, Mrs PW was referred to the The Best Foot Forward Leg Club in Dorset, where the vascular nurse specialist assessed her lower limb arterial status with a hand-held Doppler and found the ankle brachial pressure index (ABPI) to be within normal limits. Therefore, class 2 hosiery was prescribed. The twice-weekly assessments of her wound were divided between the practice nurses at the surgery and the specialist nurses at the Leg Club.

By February 2021, Mrs PW's twice-weekly visits to the surgery and Leg Club were reduced to weekly visits and just for assessment at the Leg Club, not the GP surgery. This obviously had an implication for the surgery, in terms of reduced costs.

The most important aspects of any Leg Club is the support that is provided and the ability to implement best practice for the prevention and treatment of conditions relating to the lower limb in partnership with health professionals, patients and the local community. The idea is to promote and support community-based treatment, encouraging health promotion, education and ongoing care. The Leg Club does not designate people 'patients'; instead, but each person attending the club is called a Club Member, and all members are treated collectively in a social environment. The emphasis is definitely on socialisation, as each Club Member is encouraged to learn about their neighbour and can freely discuss their own condition.

COVID-19 has obviously restricted contact and reduced the potential for specialist clinics, such as the Leg Club. The restrictions mean that people cannot continue to be treated collectively or to attend the Leg Club without appointments, as this could increase rates of infection.

Mrs PW has found it easy to socialise with six other Club Members who can be booked in at the same time in order to maintain COVID-19 precautions. She shared her story with others at the Leg Club and has permitted students—medical and nursing—to review her wound; she has also participated in selection of our Leg Club music playlist! In addition, she helped with gathering of information for a post-doctorate study at a Leg Club with a focus on why social interaction works, for whom and in what circumstances..

Mrs PW's leg ulcer healed by May 2021, and she was given a follow-up appointment 4 weeks later to ensure that it continued to heal. It can take up to 2 years for a wound that has closed to fully heal inside.

All healed Leg Club members are members for life, and this was definitely the case with Mrs PW. She was encouraged to return as a volunteer or for a cuppa when restrictions are lifted and free visits are permitted.

The pandemic has restricted the free appointment system that is so important to the Leg Club philosophy. Nevertheless, like all aspects of wound care and health conditions, care has to be provided in a safe environment, which is what the 'The Best Foot Forward Leg Club' has strived to do. In these difficult circumstances, we have still achieved good healing rates in a social environment. CWC

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