The benefits of multidisciplinary and multiagency affiliations

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The Leg Club Foundation (CRN 1111259) organisation is designed to meet the needs of people living in the community who suffer from problems relating to the lower limb by disseminating and facilitating the implementation of the psychosocial Lindsay Leg Club Model. The Leg Club model of care aims to encourage wellness rather than treat illness in all age groups and compliments traditional management of leg and foot-related conditions.

As a third sector "not for profit" organisation, the Foundation's role is to ensure that both the resourcefulness and the uniqueness of the charity remains person focused. The Leg Club philosophy, which accompanies this work, conforms to the government's vision of a society where individuals and communities have more power, responsibility and are encouraged to create better neighbourhoods and local services.

Discussion

The Foundation is an innovative charity created to reflect all aspects of leg-related problems and management of their care delivery through a collaborative approach between individuals, volunteers, and the community. Advancement in providing holistic person-centred care requires a collaborative multidisciplinary and multiagency process where people from many different parts of professional organisations contribute to the creation and implementation of new ideas.

Since the introduction of the Leg Club model in 1995, the service's performance and growth has been achieved through incessant improvements in efficiency, quality of care delivery, education, and cost-effective productivity. This has been achieved through an alliance formed between disciplines involved with social and health-related issues within the healthcare sector.

Partnerships between health and social care organisations are evolving rapidly in the private and primary health sectors with the aim to provide a most effective seamless service meeting the needs of local populations (Lindsay and Tyndale-Biscoe, 2011).

Partnerships with not-for-profit organisations, likeminded enterprises and healthcare industry ensure that the voice of the individual, volunteers, and communities are involved and are paramount for delivering public information and clinical education leading to improvements in provision of care.

The Leg Club Foundation, originally set up in 2005, recognised this and that there can be a great deal of common ground between charities forming working relationships with other enterprise organisations, not-for-profit, and commercial healthcare partners. This concerted approach within the Leg Club network has helped to maintain a successful and sustainable service provision.

As a third sector charity, the Foundation has developed excellent relations with various enterprises including the unique partnership formed within the commercial health care sector in 2005 known as the Leg Club Industry Partners (LCIP). The LCIP is made up of representatives from industry and offers a forum for them to collaborate equally in the activities of the Leg Club network and community in an open, non-competitive manner.

Due to the success of the LCIP partnership, in 2020 the Leg Club Foundation entered into an affiliation agreement with the Surgical Dressing Manufacture Association (SDMA), an organisation undertaking scientific research in complementary areas such as skin loss and tissue viability.

The Leg Club Foundation's successful relationship with its partners extends to the Leg Clubs themselves where it has given nurses the opportunity to work more closely with commercial organisations, something that does not happen in the traditional practice and district nursing environment (Lindsay and Tyndale-Biscoe, 2011).

It is essential to analyse and understand a prevailing situation and this collaborative LCIP membership is evidenced by their joint involvement in the development and regularly reviewed update of the Leg Club Code of Practice and public educational

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materials. In addition to the nature of the collaboration, it has integrated the LCIP members to create a triparted multisectoral structural approach to address health and well-being which includes sharing of resources, shared educational platforms, joint projects, and representation to government.

For the author, the LCIP membership has enabled personal and continuous professional development by actively engaging and pursuing expertise in a healthcare industry, clinical education, and marketing environment. Furthermore, there is vast clinical expertise within the LCIP members organisations where the Leg Club network can seek help and support, gain clear answers to clinical questions, and receive a rationale behind treatment decisions in all aspects of care. All of which demonstrates the importance and advantages of partnerships where individuals and public can access clinical expertise within the field of lower limb/ foot, lymphoedema management and person-centred-related care.

Although the reasons and rationale for enterprises to become involved in forming an alliance with other sectors will not be the same, the relationships must be equally beneficial to both parties and acknowledge their different approaches to health care delivery. Within the Leg Club network fostering a collaborative connection to date has involved recognising opportunities for change, identifying resources to create changes, and building trust.

Have technowlogies helped during COVID-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major shifts across society and many of us working within healthcare have experienced challenges and uncertainty as NHS service delivery has changed. Some of these could lead to lasting change, forever altering the way in which individuals interact with each other, but it can be seen as an opportunity or a catalyst for positive transformations.

Opportunistic change has been undertaken within industry and the Leg Club network where both clinicians and Leg Club members have become creative and productive utilising medical and communications technology, and their experience of receiving healthcare during the pandemic has been tremendously successful.

From an educational point of view, virtual technology has opened lots of doors and opportunities where LCIP members have been able to offer education virtually to both clinicians, Leg Club members and the public via the Leg Club website and creation of easy to understand 'Tips' all available at: www.legclub.org.

The importance of data

The accumulation of good data has always been an important component of the Leg Club model which encompasses methodology, workflows, rules, defined inputs and outputs, and reporting, supported by comprehensive training materials. In keeping with the Leg Club philosophy, the inclusive process is patient (member) centred and required only a few seconds of a nurse's time during each member visit.

It is vital that the Leg Club Foundation continues to demonstrate the model's effectiveness in not 1 but 4 areas: clinical effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, patient satisfaction, and wellbeing by showing that we are effective in treating lower limb/foot management through the psychosocial Leg Club model (Reyni and Hampton, 2015). The existing volume of Leg Club data is incredibly significant (McIntyre et al, 2020) and of interest to NHS providers. Data has been presented to the Director of the NWCSP and health economists, the outcome of which has been the inclusion of the social model as part of the recommendations for lower limb clinics.

Conclusion

Ethical practice is essential as the Leg Club Foundation works in harmonisation with the LCIP, The Collage of Phlebology, vWIN Foundation, AD INTEGRUM vascular & wound care, the SDMA and Health-Shared. Working within guidelines, professional codes, and frameworks ensures that the combined alliance is mutually beneficial, professional, educational, and ultimately patient focussed.

Furthermore, it ensures there are no conflicting interests with commercial and competitive considerations. This structure has allowed all involved to be active on all fronts within the Leg Club network, actively supporting events such as

the annual Leg Club conference, workshops, joint educational events, and public health education.

As a not for profit third sector organisation in collaboration with multi agency partners closely involved with healthcare, it provides an approach that enhances and strengthens patient/family advocacy with the aim to improve outcomes focussed on quality of life. Also, it naturally provides a significant opportunity to generate goodwill whilst promoting positive perceptions of partnerships with nurses and communities.

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