

The Lymphedema Association of Saskatchewan (LAS) held its annual Education Day and Annual General Meeting on Saturday, May 23, 2015 at the Ramada Hotel in Regina, Saskatchewan. The theme of this year's event was "New Developments In Lymphedema" providing an update on new lymphedema initiatives happening in Saskatchewan and Canada as well as new developments in lymphedema research and management happening worldwide. The event featured presentations followed by our annual AGM meeting and display tables for LAS, The Canadian Bandage Shoppe and The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Tracy Gardikiotis, LAS Member at Large, started the event with a presentation entitled, "Canadian Lymphedema Framework (CLF): Lymphedema Communities Can Drive Change". The presentation material was generously provided by Anna Kennedy, CLF Executive Director and Pathways Editor and provided a Canadian and global perspective of work being done in the lymphedema community. Both the International Lymphedema Framework (ILF), founded in 2002, and the Canadian Lymphedema Framework (CLF), founded in 2009, has made tremendous strides to improve lymphedema awareness, education and management in recent years.

The ILF has produced a number of best practice documents on the management of lymphedema, care of children with lymphedema and in advanced cancer at the end of life, as well as position documents on compression garments and surgical intervention. These resources are available for free on the ILF website, [www.lympho.org](http://www.lympho.org), to help provide education on the best standards of practice guidelines for lymphedema managements for both patients and health care providers. The ILF is also currently working on an international study, LIMPRINT, to collect data on the incidence and prevalence of lymphedema and chronic edema around the world. This lack of international epidemiological data leads to current myths and misconceptions surrounding lymphedema and chronic edema today and the information obtained from LIMPRINT will be instrumental in validating that lymphedema is a serious and prevalent condition affecting millions of people around the world that requires improved medical attention.

The CLF has also produced a number of studies and initiatives to work towards its vision that "comprehensive effective treatment for lymphedema and related disorders will be accessible to all persons across Canada". Some examples of these initiatives include the development and distribution of a new Patient Education Pamphlet and Booklet and the Pathways Magazine, Canada's first national lymphedema magazine providing education and information to Canadians living with lymphedema and the various professionals that support their care. In addition, the CLF will be co-hosting with the Alberta Lymphedema Association (ALA) the next National Lymphedema Conference on October 23rd-24<sup>th</sup> in Calgary, Alberta for both patients and health care professionals featuring a number of worldwide keynote speakers. Please visit the CLF website, [www.canadalymph.ca](http://www.canadalymph.ca) for more information.

Angela Connell-Furi, LAS Acting President, then provided an overview of the

Lymphedema Association of Saskatchewan's current initiatives to help improve lymphedema awareness, education and support here in Saskatchewan. Over the past four years, LAS launched a successful website, [www.sasklymph.ca](http://www.sasklymph.ca), Facebook page and quarterly newsletter to provide its membership with information about lymphedema services available in Saskatchewan and updates on all the latest projects, events, and happenings within the LAS. LAS currently participates in Cross Canada Calls in collaboration with the CLF, provides an LAS insert for the Pathways magazine and takes part in proclaiming and hosting LAS International Awareness Day on March 6 of each year. In addition, LAS has recently developed a patient survey that is available on its website and information obtained from this survey will be used in future discussions to government to help identify the needs of lymphedema patients.

Glenda Cook, Past President of the LAS and Lymphedema Patient Advocate, finished the morning presentations with an "Update on Saskatchewan Lymphedema Working Group Initiatives". Glenda served as the LAS representative on the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health's Lymphedema Working Group and Working Group on Implementation 2011-2013, which resulted in a number of initiatives that improved lymphedema education and services here in Saskatchewan. Glenda provided an update on these initiatives including the training of 13 additional public therapists in Complex Decongestive Therapy, the standard treatment for Lymphedema, the development and distribution of a new breast cancer education resource and video, Your Journey, available to all newly diagnosed breast cancer patients, the purchase and distribution of Lympha Press Optimal pumps for all health regions and changes to the Saskatchewan Aids to independent Living (SAIL) Special Needs Equipment Program and Compression Garment Program that now provides full coverage to lymphedema patients for day and night garments, swell spots and compression bandages. Glenda concluded her presentation by indicating that further work is needed in health care provider education, funding for treatment services, referral process, and lower extremity and breast cancer edema pathways and that patient voice is vital in identifying needs and gaps in lymphedema care.

Finally, the event concluded with our keynote luncheon speaker, Dr. Stanley Rockson, M.D., from Stanford University School of Medicine, a world-class clinician and researcher on lymphedema. In his presentation, "Lymphedema: From Bench to Bedside to Bench", Dr. Rockson provided a clear overview of lymphedema and its current management and up-to-date exciting and groundbreaking research on potential new and emerging treatments for lymphedema. Dr. Rockson highlighted research currently looking at the use of drug therapy in lymphedema. Studies using anti-inflammatories to target the inflammation changes known to cause the irreversible skin changes that occur in lymphedema and have demonstrated positive results with improvement noted clinically in over 97% of cases that involved patients with lymphedema suffering from 1 year up to 60 years. He also provided an overview of current research looking at the development of new lymphatic vessels in areas of a damaged lymphatic system in conjunction with lymph node transplant. Human collagen developed in a laboratory into a matrix

called BioBridge Implantation, is implanted into an area of damaged lymphatic vessels to serve as a bridge for new lymphatic vessels to grow into and travel through to connect to neighboring healthy lymphatic vessels. Both of these studies show promising and exciting potential to develop new and effective treatments for lymphedema patients in the future.

In closing, LAS would like to thank everyone who attended the event, the organizing committee and our event sponsor, The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, lunch sponsor The Canadian Bandage Shoppe and print sponsor, Adventure Printing, for their generous sponsorship that enabled LAS to host this informative event and to bring world-class lymphedema expert, Dr. Rockson, to Saskatchewan to share his extensive knowledge and promising research work. We are very hopeful and encouraged for the future in lymphedema care!

The event was well attended with a total of 127 registrants including patients, caregivers and health care professionals.