

On behalf of the Lymphedema Association of Saskatchewan (LAS), I had the privilege to attend the first national Canadian Lymphedema Conference: Pathways to Collaboration: Research, Education, Partnerships, recently held in Toronto on October 25-26, 2013 jointly hosted by the Lymphedema Association of Ontario Conference (LAO) and the Canadian Lymphedema Framework (CLF). This was truly a historic educational event for lymphedema in Canada, as this conference was the first national conference to be held in Canada and featured the first national Lymphedema Advocacy Workshop, all thanks to the lead sponsorship from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

The pre-conference Lymphedema Advocacy Workshop was facilitated by Niya Chari from the Canadian Breast Cancer Network and involved all provincial lymphedema association representatives, members from the lymphedema industry community and the Canadian Lymphedema Frameworks Partnership Development working group. In addition to the opportunity for all the participants to enhance their advocacy skills for lymphedema patients and treatment services, this workshop also gave us the opportunity to collaborate about our recent successes and continued challenges on a national scale. All provincial associations and the CLF should be very proud of the tremendous progress made through recent initiatives and successes in lymphedema awareness, education and treatment services throughout all provinces and we now have a more united voice to continue to build improved lymphedema care across Canada in the future!

The conference took place over a two-day period and provided up-to date information through two plenary sessions, concurrent information sessions for health professionals, patients and caregivers, a trade show of exhibitors and poster presentations. The first day plenary session featured Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Director of the Health-South Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital In Birmingham, Alabama, who spoke on Obesity and Lymphedema. Dr. Stewart identified obesity as an epidemic in North America, explored its various causes and treatments, and described how the pathophysiology of obesity contributes to the development of lymphedema. By understanding the complex condition of obesity, this information presented in this session provided valuable insight for health care providers to deal with the unique challenges of obesity to ensure safe and effective lymphedema treatment. The second day plenary session featured Dr. Stanley Rockson, Professor of Lymphatic Research and Medicine at Stanford University of School of Medicine, on Advances in Lymphedema Research. This presentation featured promising progress in the identification of disease biomarkers for lymphedema that can potentially be measured through routine blood tests and lead to the possibility for using medications to slow or reverse the progress of lymphedema. This research is very exciting for the potential to improve screening, diagnosis and medical management of lymphedema in the future!

The concurrent information sessions and poster presentations offered a comprehensive range of information and research on various topics from CDT treatment, cellulitis, skin changes, pediatric lymphedema, the role of physician

clinicians in lymphedema care in Canada, challenges of living with lymphedema and its impact on activities of daily living, support programs for patients and self management tools such as self bandaging and Aquatic Lymphatic Pool Therapy for arms and legs. The sessions also offered an overview of some exciting programs currently in place such as a Mobile Lymphedema Clinic in Wales and the McGill UHC Interdisciplinary Lymphedema Clinic. Its great to see such exciting and instrumental research and services being offered across Canada!

The trade show featured exhibitors from across Canada and the United States including various garment and bandaging suppliers (including our very own Sylvia Kreuger from the Canadian Bandage Shoppe), lymphedema products and devices, lymphedema training schools, and various organizations such as Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, WellSpring, LAO, CLF, and the Canadian Association of Enterostomal Therapy. The trade show is a great opportunity for both health care providers and patients to see and learn about all of the various products, organizations and educational programs that are offered for lymphedema.

In closing, I would like to thank the LAS for allowing me to attend this conference on their behalf and I would like to congratulate both the LAO and CLF for hosting such a successful national event for lymphedema in Canada. I returned to Saskatchewan from the information and support I gained from this conference feeling excited, motivated, and positive for the future of lymphedema care in Canada!

Sincerely,

Tracy Gardikiotis (LAS board member)