

Lymphoedema Project

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to strengthen lymphoedema services across the southern Melbourne region by:

- the development of consistent treatment guidelines and pathways, including those for prevention and early identification of lymphoedema
- the implementation of an integrated professional development program
- the collection of common service data to inform future service review and
- the development of common information resources.

Background and current situation

Lymphoedema is a chronic condition that results from a failure of the lymphatic system to adequately collect and transport lymphatic fluid through the body. It leads to a range of symptoms including swelling of an individual's affected limb/s or other body parts and has a significant impact on their quality of life.

Over the past decade there has been increasing emphasis on improving lymphoedema services at a national and state level. Given that the largest group of people with cancer related secondary lymphoedema are women with breast cancer, this impetus has largely been initiated through the breast cancer reform agenda. However, there is increasing emphasis on responding to the needs of all people with lymphoedema as it is known that lymphoedema affects up to 30-40% of patients following inguinal node dissection for gynaecological, genitourinary, colorectal and melanoma ,as well as those with related 'mixed oedemas'.

There are three main public lymphoedema services within the Southern Melbourne Integrated Cancer Service (SMICS) catchment, which include one multidisciplinary service and two uni-disciplinary services. In 2007 SMICS commissioned a review of lymphoedema services, which identified a range of service issues. This review proposed an integrated lymphoedema service model for the southern Melbourne Regionⁱ.

In 2008 SMICS commissioned Sheila Hirst Consulting to build on previous work and to develop a business case for the establishment of an integrated lymphoedema service for southern Melbourneⁱⁱ. Recommendations from the report were reviewed and revised at the request of the SMICS governance committee and phase 2 of the project was endorsed in November 2009.

Policy context and supporting documentation

Victoria has a significant cancer reform agenda that seeks to improve the planning and delivery of treatment and support to patients so that appropriate care is provided in a timely manner as close to the patient's home as possible. The agenda has been informed by *A Cancer Services Framework for Victoria* and is now driven by *Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-2011* (VCAP).

The Victorian Government policies that align and support this project include:

- *Patient management frameworks (2007)*
- *Clinical excellence in cancer care: a model for safety and quality in Victorian cancer services (2007)*
- *A guide to enhancing consumer and carer participation in Victoria's Integrated Cancer Services (2007)*

- *Achieving best practice cancer care: A guide for implementing multidisciplinary care (2007)*
- *Linking cancer care: A guide for implementing coordinated cancer care (2007)*
- *Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-11*
- *Providing optimal cancer care: Supportive care policy for Victoria (2009)*

SMICS documents that support this project:

- *SMICS Supportive Care Plan 2009*
- *SMICS Service Mapping 2009*
- *"Enhancing lymphoedema service provision in the SMICS catchment area: reviewing, analysing and identifying opportunities for improvement". August 2007*
- *"Developing an integrated model of lymphoedema services for the southern Melbourne region". Sheila Hirst Consulting, October 2008*

Progress to date:

- Development of consensus clinical practice guidelines for the following:
 - Lymphoedema patient Management Therapist Guideline
 - Standard for Limb Measurement Guideline
 - Lymphoedema compression Garment Prescription Therapist Guideline
- Development of information resources for the prevention, early identification and treatment of lymphoedema in English and 6 CALD languages
- An agreed minimum dataset for the collection of common service data
- Distribution of professional development DVDs "Ups and Downs Live with Lymphoedema" at SMICS member health services
- Presentations by lymphoedema practitioners at SMICS member health services
- Promotion of lymphoedema awareness via the SMICS newsletter and by promoting the Bi-Annual Australasian Lymphoedema Conference

11. References

ⁱ. Eason, H and Rundell, J Enhancing Lymphoedema Service Provision in the SMICS Catchment Area: Reviewing, analysing and identifying opportunities for improvement, August 2007. SMICS final report unpublished.

ⁱⁱ Hirst, S Developing an integrated model of Lymphoedema Services for the Southern Melbourne region. October 2008, SMICS business case