Lymphedema Management of the Homebound Patient Challenges in Lymphedema Treatment

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Lymphedema Management of the Homebound Patient
Challenges in Lymphedema Treatment

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Homebound
Our patients are HOMEBOUND. It is a taxing effort for them to leave the home due to many factors. We, as lymphedema therapists, have to take into consideration all of these factors to obtain optimal results.

Work Environment
The home care therapist’s work environment is the patient’s home. Their car is the mobile office and the trunk is the supply closet (Fig. 1). With lymphedema being a specialty treatment in the home care setting, therapists are often traveling 25+ miles in between each patient. Traffic congestion, weather problems, incorrect home address or directions, and patient emergencies that occur in the home can all lead to time delays and frustration throughout the day (Fig. 2).

Home Environment
Home care clinicians must respect the condition of the patient’s home and keep in mind that we are guests in our patient’s home.

Dirty and/or Cluttered Homes (Fig. 3)
• Increased risk of infection

Pets (Fig. 4)
• Protective – can interfere with lymphedema treatment or any home clinical treatment.
• Scratches increase the risk of infection.
• Pet hair, dirty litter boxes, feces/vomit/urine on the floor, and pet food/treats can be overwhelming

Low Chairs / Seating Surfaces (Fig. 5)
• Prolonged dependent positioning

Smoking In Home
Limited Space in Home
• Inconvenient therapist body mechanics
• No Critical Support Staff in Patient’s Home

Medical Issues
All lymphedema therapists face the same or similar medical challenges along the way. However, in the home care setting the patients are often more acute, having been referred for treatment following a hospitalization or rehab stay. This requires close consultation with referring physicians or specialists. Below are some examples of medical conditions which require extra consideration:

• Wounds
• Kidney Failure
• Incontinence
• Psychological / Emotional

Alternate Solutions
Intermittent Compression Pumps (Fig. 6)
• Easy for patients and caregivers to don and doff
• Better chance that patient will assume an elevated position at least once per day

TuBigrip (Fig. 7)
• Easy for patients and caregivers to don and doff
• Improves patient compliance

Portable Sewing Machine (Fig. 8)
• Easy to use
• Can sew ends of Tubigrip to prevent bunching of material into arch of foot

Case: Modified Garment

Problem:
Patient achieved significant reduction in lower extremity edema.
Velcro closure garments were the preferred garment choice due to inadequate dexterity and limited assistance available.

SOLUTION:
• Purchase of two neoprene belts (Fig. 9)
• Cut belts into strips and attached Velcro

EXPENSES:
$10.00 for the 2 belts
$10.00 for sewing expenses
TOTAL COST:
$20.00

Personal Considerations

Social Dynamics in Home
• Needs patience
• Control issues

Limited Resources / Finances
• Don’t have form or don’t have enough

Incontinence
• Need to determine appropriate/ness
• Close coordination with hospice team

Psychological / Emotional
• Verbal/physically abusive caregivers

Social Security
• Need to obtain/prepare appropriately nutritious food

Health Insurance
• Inadequate coverage for optimal compression garments

Limited Time
• Unable to afford required assistance at home

Recommendations
• Take only absolutely needed supplies into dirty homes
• Find a clean area for treatment
• Politely ask patient to put away pets prior to arrival
• Recommend recliners or lift chairs (lift chairs are partially covered by Medicare) (Fig. 11)
• Find a position of comfort to treat, or take frequent breaks

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Casino: Mod Garment

LympheCare

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Goals of the Home Care Lymphedema Therapist
Our goals are always to achieve optimal level of edema volume reduction, however given the challenges that we face, we often have to compromise and modify our approach and goals for each individual patient. Our goals may change and be focused on long term infection and wound prevention. We exhaust all options in search of the most ideal and realistic solution that allows every patient the opportunity for success.

Although working in the home has its challenges, we often become a trusted professional and achieve excellent results and long term successful self-management of lymphedema.