Local lymphoedema service celebrates ten year anniversary

Patient, Lorraine Mills, is helping Herefordshire Macmillan NHS Lymphoedema Service celebrate its' ten year anniversary, a decade after she was one of its' first patients.

To mark this occasion, Lorraine and the lymphoedema clinical nurse specialists held an information stand at Hereford County Hospital on Wednesday 20 January to raise awareness of this condition.

69 year old, Lorraine, from Leominster, was one of the first patients to use the service when it was first launched. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001. After undergoing a full mastectomy, surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment, she developed severe lymphoedema affecting her arm and chest wall.

Lorraine said: 'It's made a world of difference being able to access this local service. I had been suffering with pain from the swelling in my arm, which also affected my chest wall, but as soon as I met the team of lymphoedema nurses things improved.

"I received practical advice on safe exercises, along with specialist massage undertaken by the nurses to help drain the excess fluid in my swollen arm, a specialist sleeve to wear and more understanding of how to manage my condition.

"I would recommend this service to anyone with lymphoedema. The nurses are very helpful, kind and available to give advice between visits to the hospital'.

Lymphoedema is a chronic condition that causes swelling when the lymphatic system is not able to drain fluid properly, which can be due to numerous causes. More than 1,300 patients have received care and advice from the service set up ten years ago by two cancer nurse specialists, Jackie Jones and Jan Osbaldiston, from Wye Valley NHS Trust.

Jackie Jones, lead breast/gynae/lymphoedema clinical nurse specialist at Wye Valley NHS Trust, said: "We are delighted to celebrate with Lorraine our ten year anniversary. Patients in Herefordshire, with cancer treatment-related lymphoedema and chronic non-cancer related lymphoedema, are able to access this specialist service by a referral from a health care professional.

"The service has been developed and we now have a team of three part-time clinical nurse specialists and administration support staff. In addition to this, our lymphoedema service has integrated with our breast care/gynae oncology services to improve patient education.

"We are very proud of the service that we offer and wish to thank our team, and colleagues who we work closely with at the Trust, who provide streamlined care for patients in Herefordshire".

Emma Hope, lymphoedema clinical nurse specialist at Wye Valley NHS Trust, added: “Patient self-care management is vital to control lymphoedema and simple techniques are used, including a good skincare routine, exercise, managing a healthy weight, wearing compression garments and doing self-massage.
“We provide specialist lymphoedema assessment, care and treatment to help patients maintain and regain mobility, optimise self-care and improve their quality of life. Our aim is also to reduce the risk of lymphoedema related cellulitis, which can require hospital admission”.

These are some actions that those at risk can take to prevent lymphoedema:

- Not performing repetitive tasks without taking regular breaks;
- Wearing gloves when gardening or doing housework;
- Taking care when playing with pets to avoid skin scratches;
- Using insect repellent and high factor sun cream;
- Using nail clippers rather than scissors and not pushing your cuticles back;
- Using an electric razor rather than a manual one if you shave your legs or under arms;
- Avoid anything that increases the temperature of your skin, such as very hot baths or showers;
- Using a non-scented moisturiser on your skin each day to keep skin healthy;
- Continuing to do arm, shoulder and leg exercises taught after your surgery;
- Avoid blood pressure and blood tests from affected arm whenever possible.

To find out about lymphoedema contact the Lymphoedema Support Network on 020 7351 0990 or visit www.lymphoedema.org or contact the local specialist team on 01432 372966.

Photograph
Left to right: Julie Sargeant – lymphoedema nurse, Emma Hope - lymphoedema clinical nurse specialist, Lorraine Mills – patient, Jan Osbaldiston and Jackie Jones – lead breast/gynae/lymphoedema clinical nurse specialist.

Ends

Notes to Editors WVT:

- Wye Valley NHS Trust is the provider health services across Herefordshire and beyond. The Trust exists to improve the wellbeing, independence and health of the people we serve. We are the leading provider of health care in Herefordshire.
• By working closely with our partners, we can make good our promise to deliver a quality of care we would want for ourselves, our families and our friends.
• With an estimated annual turnover of around £160 million, we employ around 2,700 plus staff. We aim to build new relationships between our staff, patients, service users and their carers with the wider community. For further information please contact:

For further information please contact:

John Burnett, Communication and Engagement Manager, Wye Valley NHS Trust: 01432 372928 or Fiona Gurney, Communications Assistant 01432 355444 ext. 5105.