Manual Lymphatic Therapy for Chronic Conditions

Purpose for the course

• To become familiar with the indications for Integrated Lymph Drainage to benefit patient outcomes and add to the marketable skills of the therapists and the toolbox from which to draw the most beneficial treatments

• To decide if the full MLD/CDP certification program is right for you

Public Domain
What does the lymphatic system do?

- An open loop system that absorbs excess fluid from extra-cellular tissue spaces. This fluid is designed to cleanse and filter the tissues as it goes. The fluid is eventually moved to the circulatory system and joins it in the function of absorbing fats from the intestines. This fluid is rich in white blood cells. Any excess fluid is then moved from the circulatory to the renal system to be excreted.

- The lymph system functions to filter harmful bacteria, make white blood cells, increasing immunity, maintain a fluid balance in the body, and assist in the digestion of fats in the intestines.

- A MAJOR component of the immune system.
Lymphatic System Anatomy and Physiology Overview

- Lying parallel to the circulatory system, it differs in that it is an open loop system, there is no central pump as with the cardiovascular system, and pumps at a much slower rate.

- Magically, we are created with all of our major areas of lymph nodes on the ventral side of our body. This is important, because we can protect all of them by curling up in a fetal position if we are to come under attack!

Anatomy, cont’d

- There are 600-700 lymph nodes in the body.

- The areas most concentrated with lymph nodes are the neck, each axilla, each groin area, and the abdomen.

- The nodes serve to filter the lymph fluid, thicken the lymph fluid, to make more lymphocytes—which increases the body’s immunity, and to store matter that can’t be removed such as coal dust, dyes, silica, minerals, glass, etc.
Lymphatic Fluid

- Lymph fluid is rich in protein making the edematous area very thick and heavy feeling.

- Treatment is necessary to not only move the fluid out of the area, but also the protein. If it is not treated, over time, the lymphatic vessels will stretch out permanently and external compression and treatment will be necessary for a lifetime to maintain proper pressure in the valves to move fluid more normally.

Lymph Transport

- Lymph fluid is transported internally through absorption then through suction of the lymph nodes and contraction of the lymphangions 3-7 times per minute (1 p. 37)

- It is also moved externally (outside of the lymph system) from the contraction of muscles through movement and exercise, the pulsing of arteries, breathing, the peristalsis of the intestines, external compression and through manual therapy. (1 p. 37)

How does it work?

- IMLT stimulates the immune system by increasing lymph function directly and blood circulation indirectly. Venous circulation is aided by the motion, and edemas can be reduced.

- Pain can be reduced by the inhibitory effect of the mechano-receptors-stimulating parasympathetic responses.
**What can the techniques be used for?**

- To move lymph fluid including protein, fat and toxins from one part of the body to another
- Decrease pain
- Stimulating immunity
- Clearing areas where toxins are held, i.e. cellulite
- Decreasing sympathetic responses, thus helping with depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia and muscle tension

**Indications for therapy**

- Orthopedic traumas, surgeries (see what other sources can be cited for complete list)
- Wounds
- Edema (if properly identified)
- Arthritis
- Anti-spasticity
- Pain
- Dermatological-acne, scars, cellulite, stretch marks,
- Orthopedic Conditions
- Sports Medicine, Fractures, Carpal Tunnel
- Tinnitus/Vertigo
- Dry Eyes, fibromyalgia, CFS/rheumatic conditions
- (verbally go over complete list in number 1 book)

**Contraindications for Therapy (All Lymphatic Therapies)**

- CHF
- Renal Failure (must be able to urinate)
- DVT or any major obstructions or serious cardiac conditions (groceries)
- Infection (Cellulitis) Infection and inflammation are not the same. Infection always has inflammation, but inflammation is not always infection. Signs and Symptoms of cellulitis: red streaking, fever, chills. Ask if the patient has had any recent cuts or abrasions. Pet scratches, etc.
- Active bleeding/internal or external
- Untreated cancers
Precautions

- Thyroid disorders (avoid anterior neck)
- Asthmatics where attacks are triggered by the vagus nerve (avoid work over the sternum)
- Pre-cancerous areas
- History of TB
- The abdomen during menstruation
- Hypotension, treated cancers, (certified therapists only)
- New sudden onset edema
- Edemas/lymphedemas for certified therapists only (find alternative source for addl prec. On p59)

What does the lymph system do?

- Part of the immune system
- Your bodies “sewer system”
- When there is stagnation or a blockage of lymph, immunoglobulin are prevented from reaching the sites where they can perform their immune functions (1. p.34)

The keys to performing proper Integrated Manual Lymph Therapy

- **Pressure**: Crucial to engage the lymphatics, not the musculoskeletal system. This therapy should NEVER be painful or cause erythema. We use the least amount of pressure necessary to engage the lymphatics. This feels like moving the skin to the point of a myofascial barrier.
- **Rhythm**: On two three, off two three is a good beginners rhythm. As you become more experienced, you will be more tuned in to the rhythms of your clients (include items in p61 book 1)
- **Sequence**: proximal to distal, opening the nodes and pathways that you are draining to first!
- **Direction**: stretching motion in the direction of the vessel’s origin
- **Flat Hands**: using as much surface area as possible even the palm. This differs from typical Swedish (get access to lymph charts) Develop treatment sequences.
Immune System Conditions and IMLT

- Many symptoms of auto-immune disorders such as lupus, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, Epstein-Barr/mononucleosis, allergies, eczema, ulcerative colitis, etc. are aided by IMLT.
- Due to the direct impact that IMLT has on the immune system, these techniques are gentle enough, yet effective.

Billing Codes

- 97001 PT evaluation (OT, ST, MT)
- 97530 Therapeutic Activities—Skin care instruction, teaching proper donning and doffing of compression stockings
- 97110 Therapeutic Exercises—Lymphedema exercises and instruction
- 97140 Manual Therapy—Lymphatic drainage massage

Codes

- Diagnosis codes: 457.1 lymphedema, lipedema
- Phlebolymphedema, 457.0 post-mastectomy lymphedema syndrome
- Treatment ICD-9 Codes
  - 729.5 Pain in limb
  - 729.81 Swelling in limb
  - 781.2 Abnormality of Gait
  - 719.7 Difficulty in walking
  - 457.0 Postmastectomy lymphedema
  - 457.1 Lymphedema other
  - 709.2 Scar conditions/fibrosis of skin
### Medicare Specific Billing Guidelines

- Treatment must be reasonable and necessary to restore patient’s PLOFs.
- Must document change in function! Again, not documentation of specific number of feet walked, or that they are now able to lift 5 pound weights 30 repetitions, but: Patient can now walk around her home without pain allowing her to care for her children.
- Client can now lift arms overhead without pain to complete household chores.
- Girth measurements, ROM, strength measurements are objective, but do not demonstrate change in function.

### When it's not lymphedema

- Lipedema: Cause unknown-usually corkscrew vessels present in the groin and leg lymphatics that trap fat molecules. Signs and symptoms include tenderness, ease in bruising secondary to fragile blood vessels being over stretched from corkscrew effect, typically pear shaped, size is symmetrical and the feet are spared. Often present with medial knee bulges. Often begins after hormone changes, i.e. pregnancy, menopause, or during pregnancy.
- Usually only women affected. 11% of population according to a 2001 study. p. 374-417
- Psychosocial Implications-depression, may have obesity secondary to compression
- Hereditary component that has been found to be reversible if found early.
  - Koln, Germany: Viavitil Verlag, Lymphedema Diagnosis and Therapy

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**Application of Manual Lymphatic Drainage Techniques for Chronic Conditions**

Carmen Thompson, BS, LPTA, CMT, CLT

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Review Questions

Resources

- Organizations for more information:
  - www.lymphedemahope.com
  - www.lymphnet.org
  - www.lighthouselymphedema.org
  - www.elymphnotes.org
  - www.breastcancer.org
- www.discountsurgical.com
- www.bandagesplus.com
- Contact for 135 hour course info