

The perception of self-care by men diagnosed with lymphoedema: an online survey within the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland

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Introduction: Lymphoedema is an incurable long-term condition resulting in the formation of oedema in any part of the body. The study focused upon answering 'How do men perceive the self-management of their non-cancer related lymphoedema?', due to the paucity of research in this area. Theories related to hegemonic masculinity and the health, illness, men, and masculinities (HIMM) framework were applied within this study.

Method: An online survey based upon the validated LYMQoL (lymphoedema quality of life tool) was applied using an inductive narrative inquiry approach. The survey was administered online with the findings analysed through the application of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2021).

Results: Three themes were identified in which men use their available capital to re-negotiate their hegemonic masculinity. Theme one considered the strategies and capital men used to manage the psychological impact of their self-care, such as physical concealment. Theme two focused on relationships and their place within a man's approach to self-care. Theme three considered the use of physical control as means to manage their perceived vulnerability and in the creation of capital.

Conclusion: The findings provide insight into the complexity of self-care within lymphoedema and how this disrupts their masculinity. The application of the two theories 1) hegemonic masculinity, 2) HIMM framework and the 3) other studies provide further insight as to how men negotiate in the study and in the literature. Masculine capital is used to manage changes within their hegemonic masculinity because of self-managing their lymphoedema condition.