



Lymphoedema Education Benchmark Statements

If you teach courses leading to professional healthcare qualifications in:

Medicine? Nursing? Physiotherapy? Occupational therapy? Remedial massage therapy?

Does your programme cover the essentials?

The **Lymphoedema Education Benchmark Statements** have been developed as a *teaching resource* under the auspices of the International Lymphoedema Framework, a global umbrella organization, and registered UK charitable body. They have been developed through a process of expert panel consensus to:

- 1) reflect what any person with, or at risk of lymphoedema, might reasonably expect from newly qualified health professionals and
- 2) to foster global consistency and governance in relation to lymphoedema education.

In recognition of the demands on any health professional curriculum, guidance and resources are being developed on the ILF website to facilitate their integration without the need for additional teaching sessions.

What are educational benchmark statements?

Subject benchmark statements provide an important external source of reference and guidance for the development and enhancement of courses and programmes enabling learning outcomes to be evaluated against agreed expectations and standards. They are designed to be used flexibly, in conjunction with the requirements set by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and provide a sound foundation for subsequent learning.

Lymphoedema Education Benchmark Statements cover the following areas of professional knowledge and understanding

- Anatomy and physiology
- Pathophysiology of lymphoedema
- Recognition of various causes of oedema
- Recognition of lymphoedema
- Patient education and support needs
- Components of treatment

Professional skills and abilities

Newly qualified health care professionals have valuable generic skills that may be applied to good effect for individuals with, or at risk of, lymphoedema, provided they have a basic understanding of the principles, e.g. in skin care or exercise. No additional treatment or specialist skills are expected at the point of registration. However, any health care professional working with particular high risk groups would be encouraged to develop the appropriate skills for their client group, e.g. specific assessment skills, exploration of information needs and supporting appropriate lifestyle changes.

Why are Lymphoedema Education Benchmarks important for health professional education?

The rationale for incorporating basic knowledge of lymphoedema into undergraduate curricula is the evidence of:

- Increasing prevalence of lymphedema and chronic oedema, in which lymphatic impairment is a feature;
- Growing 'at risk' population - elderly, obese, those with limited mobility and various co-morbidities, such as chronic venous disease, some cancers and heart failure;
- Early identification and intervention improving patient outcomes, quality of life and reducing costs to the health service
- The role of the lymphatic system and lymphedema being poorly addressed in health professional education curricula.

Resources are being developed to support the Lymphoedema Education Benchmarks.

Please visit www.lympho.org for more information.



Lymphoedema Education Benchmark Statements

Benchmarks	Expected Learning Outcomes	
1. Explore the anatomy and physiology of the lymphatic system	Explain the basic anatomy and function of the lymphatic system in simple terms	Explain in simple terms the role of the lymphatic system in removing excess fluid and particles from interstitial spaces and composition of lymph
2. Discuss the pathophysiology of lymphoedema	Identify groups at risk of lymphoedema, including those with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancer • Venous insufficiency • Obesity • Immobility • High exposure to mosquito bites 	Identify primary and secondary forms of lymphoedema, including those related to cancer, filariasis and venous disease. List the consequences of lymphostasis in terms of skin and tissue changes and cellulitis
3. Recognise that there are various causes of oedema which may co-exist with lymphoedema	Recognise local and systemic causes of oedema, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lymphoedema • Cellulitis • Deep vein thrombosis • Other vascular disorders • Systemic disorders, e.g. cardiac, liver or renal impairment • Advancing and metastatic cancer 	
4. Identify the features of lymphoedema	Describe the clinical features of early and late presentations of lymphoedema Identify symptoms associated with lymphoedema	Identify features of cellulitis as a cause or complication of lymphoedema Identify symptoms that may be experienced by a person with lymphoedema
5. Explore the education needs of individuals who have, or are at risk of developing lymphoedema and how these might be met	List the basic advice required by those with established lymphoedema to minimise worsening of the condition, including information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin hygiene and hydration • Fungal infection • Trauma prevention • Regular activity and exercise • How to put on and take off compression garments 	Identify suitable sources of information on reducing the risk of lymphoedema and/or exacerbation and how to access treatment
6. Explore the basics of lymphoedema management	Identify the core components of lymphoedema management as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Skin care • Exercise – gradual progression and warm down to enhance lymph flow, general well-being, strengthening and fitness • Breathing exercises • Compression therapy • Lymphatic drainage 	Recognise the psychosocial and financial impact of lymphoedema Recognise the need for long term monitoring and maintenance for lymphoedema Identify the urgency for treatment of cellulitis, and the treatment options Identify limitations of own role and when and where to refer to a qualified lymphoedema practitioner.