

Primary lower limb lymphedema: a focus on its functional, social and emotional impact

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Abstract :

Primary lymphedema is a rare, chronic and distressing condition with negative effects on physical, social and emotional level. The purpose of these reports was to present and discuss two different cases of primary lower limb lymphedema with a focus on its physical and mental impact and on some qualitative aspects of patients' self-reported experiences. The patients were recruited as they used occasional services within the University Hospital of Heraklion (Crete, Greece). The functional and mental impact of primary lymphedema was measured using the generic Medical Outcome Study short form-36 questionnaire and open-ended questions led to give more emphasis to patients' experiences. The analysis of short form-36 results in the first patient disclosed a significant functional impairment with a minor impact of the condition on emotional and social domains. For the second patient quality of life scores in the emotional and social domains were affected. Our findings support further the statement that physicians should pay full attention to appraise the patient's physical and emotional condition. General practitioners have the opportunity to monitor the long-term impact of chronic disorders. Posing simple open-ended questions and assessing the level of physical and mental deficits in terms of well-being through the use of specific metric tools can effectively follow-up rare conditions in the community.

Key Word :

lymphedema, diagnosis, quality of life, primary health care

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