World Lymphedema Day

On March 6, lymphedema advocates from around the world are joining together to celebrate the 6th annual World Lymphedema Day.

The following towns and cities{ Name your communities that are proclaiming the day }

What is Lymphedema?

Lymphedema is an incurable disease afflicting 250 million people worldwide. It is one of the most underdiagnosed diseases in the world. More people have it than MS, Parkinson’s, ALS, Aids and Muscular Dystrophy combined.It is estimated that 1 million Canadians are affected.

Lymphedema is caused by damage to the lymphatic system through surgery, trauma, cancer treatment, or genetic malfunction leading to improper development or dysfunction of the system. Lymphatic fluid accumulates in the tissues resulting in chronic and disfiguring swelling in one or more parts of the body.

The lymphatic system assists in maintaining fluid balance in the body and is an integral part of the immune system, transporting infection-fighting cells to tissues that require assistance. The affected part(s) of the body become prone to cellulitis infections. Complications from cellulitis can have serious, potentially life-threatening consequences.

BC Lymphedema Association

The BC Lymphedema Association (BCLA) is a non-profit organization whose board members and volunteers live with lymphedema. Together they advocate of behalf of individuals and families affected by lymphedema; advance awareness of the disease; and, support local, provincial, national and international research and development.

Treatments for Lymphedema in BC

Unlike in other provinces, BC had no treatment centre until 1 year ago, When **the VGH/UBC Lymphedema Program**. Thisis the only evaluation service covered by MSP in B.C. Ongoing treatment is only available through private therapists offering specialized therapies such as manual lymph drainage. Management of this disease also requires daily or regular use of medical devices such as compression garments (day and nighttime), pneumatic compression pumps, and/ or specialized custom wraps and bandages. Medical devices can range in price from around $100 to upwards of $600/ device.Many people with lymphedema are unable to work to at their former capacities, are on fixed incomes, and/or have families.All of these combine to create financial hardship of one sort or another for those with lymphedema.

How you can help.

If you have or know of someone with lymphedema, please contact the BC Lymphedema Association: 1-866-991-2252. Visit the BC Lymphedema Association website at [www.bclymph.org](http://www.bclymph.org). Join their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/26905673023/>

Donations to BCLA or the VGH Lymphedema Program are welcome and help the volunteers meet our mission of “promoting optimal healthy living with lymphedema”.