



POSITION STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL LYMPHEDEMA NETWORK

NLN Medical Advisory Committee; Approved by the NLN Board of Directors: 11/10/2005; Expires: 8/1/2008

TOPIC: TRAINING OF LYMPHEDEMA THERAPISTS

With the growing awareness of lymphedema over the last decade in the United States, there has been a proliferation of treatment approaches that have surfaced throughout the health care continuum (1-3). The European training centers, present since the early 20th century, have established educational curriculum for therapist and instructor training (4;5).

As lymphedema treatment techniques have been introduced to the United States, variation among the treatment approaches and training methods has surfaced. There are currently broad scale efforts being undertaken to standardize treatment approaches and training techniques (6).

In order to have an adequate knowledge base in the pathophysiology of lymphatic function and disease, and sufficient training in the manual techniques and compression bandaging principles, along with the other components of Complete Decongestive Therapy, it is the position of the National Lymphedema Network that the **minimum requirement** for training in Complete Decongestive Therapy be as follows:

- Practitioners treating patients with lymphedema will have successfully completed 135 hours of Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) coursework from one lymphedema training program.
- The coursework shall consist of 1/3 theoretical instruction and 2/3 practical lab work teaching methods directly aimed at the treatment of lymphedema.
- Proof of satisfactory completion of 12 credit hours of college level human anatomy, physiology, and/or pathology from an accredited college or university
- Have current unrestricted licensure in a related medical field (PT, PTA, OT, COTA, MT, RN, MD, DO, DC)

These criteria are consistent with the Lymphology Association of North America (LANA) standards that have been put forth in an effort to establish basic minimum criteria to certify adequate competency in the treatment of lymphedema. Advanced education in Complete Decongestive Therapy is necessary to achieve these basic criteria. Health care providers are advocating for advanced training to adequately meet the needs of this specialized population (7).

It is the position of the NLN that therapists treating patients with lymphedema meet the above criteria as a **basic minimum standard** to ensure that a standardized level of care is being provided to this population.

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