



Wakefield dressmaker left with large leg ulcer that wouldn't heal warns people who are worried to seek urgent medical help

- 'Get Loud For Legs And Feet' – national Legs Matter Week October 12-16
- Outwood woman backs campaign to stop preventable disability
- Wakefield nurse consultant urges people to check their legs and feet
- Life-changing leg and foot problems affects an estimated 1 million people

A dressmaker, who suffered with a large leg ulcer for over four years, is urging people to get the right medical help early if they are worried about their legs and feet.

Julia Shaw of Outwood, Wakefield, first noticed a problem in 2015 after an operation to pin her broken leg resulted in an open wound which steadily got bigger and wouldn't heal. After undergoing a muscle transplant and skin graft to cover it, a second wound appeared, which also refused to heal.

Julia was going to the hospital every week to have the dressings changed, but after two and a half years there was no improvement. She was eventually transferred to Pinderfields Hospital, Wakefield, under the care of vascular nurse consultant Dr Leanne Atkin, which proved to be a huge turning point.

"The whole vascular team were determined to heal my wound and got me straight into compression socks, which really do work. I also had an ultrasound, which found I had blocked veins contributing greatly to the lack of healing.

"The crucial thing is to get the right care early. For wounds like these, you need a specialist consultant straight away. It is vitally important that you are confident with your consultant and the treatment being offered. Do not settle for anything less."

Julia is one of an estimated one million people a year in the UK who have a life-threatening or serious problem with their legs and feet, often caused by an underlying issue with their circulation.

Dr Atkin is also chair of the UK's Legs Matter Campaign - working to improve care for serious lower leg conditions including leg or foot ulcers, swollen legs and cellulitis. She hopes that increased awareness will result in more people demanding that the right care is provided the first time and help to prevent patient suffering.

Dr Atkin said: "Lower limb conditions are a silent and growing epidemic, but with the right care, much of the suffering and life-changing leg and foot problems could be avoided. As part of Legs Matter Week this year we are urging people to seek help quickly if they are worried and to go back to their health care provider if their leg or foot isn't healing, to help avoid a permanent disability."

The UK has a growing number of people experiencing serious lower limb problems - often linked to obesity and costing the NHS up to £5.3 billion annually. ⁱ

As well as leading to extensive suffering, these problems are also leaving many people with amputated legs, feet and toes, secondary health issues and deteriorating health.

From October 12-16, Legs Matter Week hopes to encourage more people to check their legs and feet using a simple three-point checklist <https://legsmatter.org/three-point-leg-check/> and to seek the right help if they are worried. Organisers have created the 'Legs Matter Lounge' with helpful videos, resources and free virtual events including meditation and live Q&A sessions with experts, sign up here: <https://legsmatter.org/legs-matter-week/lounge>.

Since lockdown, important, new self-care Coronavirus resources for patients, families and health care professionals have also been added to the Legs Matter website www.legsmatter.org to meet the growing demand for information.

Julia added: "There needs to be more awareness about the importance of checking your legs and feet. The crucial thing is to get the right care early with the right approach and then you have a good chance of getting better quickly. As of today, my wound has now been deemed 'healed' which is wonderful and the start of my new future."

An All-Party Parliamentary Report published in February 2019 has called for action in tackling differences in lower limb amputation rates. It said: "The fact that every hour in England someone over 50 has a minor foot amputation and every two hours someone loses their whole leg is unacceptable." ⁱⁱ

And an NHS England study published in 2017 estimates that having effective care early, reduces leg ulcer healing times from around two years to just a few months and is 10 times cheaper. ⁱⁱⁱ

But many patients suffer unnecessarily for several years due to a lack of knowledge and not accessing the right care.

Supported by NHS England, the Legs Matter Campaign was formed by a group of the UK's leading lower limb clinicians, who, together with patient partners, are campaigning to make serious leg and foot problems a thing of the past.

Operating under the governance of the charity, The Tissue Viability Society, Legs Matter is also made up of representatives from The British Lymphology Society, Accelerate, The College of Podiatry, The Society of Vascular Nurses, The Lindsay Leg Club Foundation, Foot in Diabetes UK and The Leg Ulcer Forum. It wants to ensure that anyone with a lower leg or foot problem understands their condition and gets the urgent care and support that they need.

For more information go to www.legsmatter.org or watch our film <https://legsmatter.org/legs-matter-week/watch-our-film/>

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Note to Editors:

- Read Legs Matter member expert opinions in our **Making legs matter in a global pandemic**: what we know and what needs to happen now. Health experts share their opinion on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown on the nation's leg and foot health. <https://legsmatter.org/making-legs-matter-in-a-global-pandemic/>
- Every hour in the UK someone over 50 has part of their foot amputated.^{iv}
- Amputation rates are 70% higher in the Black as compared to the White populations of England.^v
- There is a North/South divide with major amputation rates 30% higher in Northern England compared with the South.^{vi}
- More than 420,000 people in the UK live with lymphoedema (failure of the lymphatic system) – making it as common as Alzheimer's disease.^{vii}

Press Release issued: October 5, 2020. Media contact: For more information or to request an interview with Dr Leanne Atkin, please contact Cathy Kelly on 07704 130226 or email cathy@catherinekellypr.co.uk

References:

ⁱ Guest JF, Ayoub N, McIlwraith T, et al. Health economic burden that wounds impose on the National Health Service in the UK. BMJ Open 2015; https://legsmatter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/e009283.full_.pdf

ⁱⁱ APPG on Vascular And Venous Disease: Saving Limbs, Saving Lives: 2019 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5981cfcfe4fcb50783c82c8b/t/5c5ac501ec212df19f93a228/1549452562850/A%2BCall%2Bto%2BAction%2Bto%2BReduce%2BInequalities%2Bin%2BLower%2BLimb%2BAmputation%2BRates%2Bw....pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ NHS England RightCare Scenario: 2017 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/rightcare/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2017/01/nhs-rightcare-bettys-story-narrative-full.pdf>

^{iv} APPG on Vascular And Venous Disease: Saving Limbs, Saving Lives: 2019 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5981cfcfe4fcb50783c82c8b/t/5c5ac501ec212df19f93a228/1549452562850/A%2BCall%2Bto%2BAction%2Bto%2BReduce%2BInequalities%2Bin%2BLower%2BLimb%2BAmputation%2BRates%2Bw....pdf>

^v As above

^{vi} As above

^{vii} <http://www.lnni.org/content/national-lymphoedema-partnership-nlp-launch-new-commissioning-guidelines>