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| <b>Reference:</b>       | FOI.16208.24     |
| <b>Subject:</b>         | Lymphoedema      |
| <b>Date of Request:</b> | 18 December 2024 |

**Requested:**

1. How many women were diagnosed with lymphoedema, lipoedema/lipalgia and both conditions during the following periods:
  - a. 2019/20
  - b. 2020/21
  - c. 2021/22
  - d. 2022/23
  - e. 2023/24
  - f. April 2024-present
2. What is the treatment pathway for patients with lymphedema, lipoedema/lipalgia and for those that have both conditions?

**Response:**

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) is unable to provide you with all of the information requested, as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate limit” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (or 2½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

In order to provide you with the data requested for question 1, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of all Physiotherapy referrals, for the requested periods, to identify the information that would fulfil your request, as this is not recorded centrally.

The UHB can confirm that two thousand one hundred and seventy-six (2,176) referrals were received during the 2024 calendar year alone. Therefore, to provide you with the exact information being requested, conducting the search would far exceed the ‘appropriate limit’, costing the UHB the following just for the 2024 financial year:

2,176 @ 15 minutes per item = 544 hours  
 544 hours @ £25 per hour = £13,600.00

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA), which provides an exemption from a public authority’s obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

However, under Section 16 of the FoIA, the UHB has a duty to provide advice and assistance. Therefore, the UHB provides the accessible information it holds below.

1. The UHB provides, within the table below, the number of female patients admitted to a UHB hospital with a diagnosis of lymphoedema, lipoedema/lipalgia and both conditions, as recorded on the UHB’s Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS), during the 2019/20 to 2023/24 financial years and the period 1 April to 31 December 2024.

| Financial year              | Lymphoedema | Lipoedema/lipalgia | Lymphoedema and lipoedema/lipalgia |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2019/20                     | 167         | 360                | 6                                  |
| 2020/21                     | 177         | 366                | 5                                  |
| 2021/22                     | 207         | 452                | *                                  |
| 2022/23                     | 199         | 408                | *                                  |
| 2023/24                     | 244         | 452                | 8                                  |
| 1 April to 31 December 2024 | 163         | 290                | *                                  |

Where the figures in the table have been replaced with an asterisk (\*), the UHB is unable to provide you with the exact number of patients due to the low numbers of cases (less than 5), as there is a potential risk of identifying individuals if this was disclosed. The UHB is therefore withholding this detail under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). This information is protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/UK General Data Protection Regulations, as its disclosure would constitute unfair and unlawful processing and would be contrary to the principles and articles of the UK GDPR. This exemption is absolute and therefore, there is no requirement to apply the public interest test.

In reaching this decision, the DPA and UK GDPR define personal data as data that relates to a living individual who can be identified solely from that data or from that data and other information, which is in the possession of the data controller.

2. The UHB does not hold a specific pathway. However, patients identified with lymphoedema are primarily managed within the community; the UHB's Physiotherapy Team work alongside District/community nurses to manage these patients. The UHB's On the Ground Education Programme (OGEP) team educates community staff to identify lymphoedema/chronic oedema within their caseloads, raising awareness and allowing staff to be proactive in the management of lymphoedema, with the use of compression garments where suitable. Their role is to also educate on use/management of the 'Chronic Wet Leg Pathway'. They also assist in the management of complex lower limb patients that they identify within the community and will refer these on to the local teams.

For those patients managed within a clinic setting, they are referred to the Lymphoedema Team for treatment and garment provision to manage their lymphoedema, which includes intensive treatments and specialist treatments. Independent self-management of their condition is also promoted.

If patients fit the strict criteria for surgical interventions and are deemed suitable for surgery by a Consultant or GP, they are referred via the Lymphoedema Wales Clinical Network (National Team) for review, prior to surgical listing.