

Compression, complementary and alternative medicine: a case study

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Introduction: Complementary and alternative medicine in Australia dates back to the 1970's. (Baer, HA, 2008) Public demand for complementary and alternative medicine has resulted in growing acceptance by both consumers and health practitioners. (Bodane, C & Brownson K, 2002) The internet has also enabled relevant information to be widely available and readily accessed.

Aim: This case study will illustrate collaborative, client centred treatment comprising: alternative medicine and compression garments to successfully manage secondary lymphoedema.

The client presented to the occupational therapy department after accessing multiple medical specialists. The swelling commenced twelve months prior with the diagnosis of secondary lymphoedema following a traumatic work injury. The client had trialled multiple conservative treatments before initiating a search for alternative and complementary treatments in an effort to relieve the swelling.

Findings: The use of cabbage and healing clay brought mixed initial results and the client was dedicated to continuing with the treatment in conjunction with compression garments under the supervision of the occupational therapist.

The case study highlights: Collaboration is a vital ingredient in developing a successful treatment plan. There are both physical and psychological benefits associated with the approach. When used as an adjunct to current lymphoedema best practice, collaboration can significantly enhance client outcomes.

Conclusion: The study will educate and provoke discussion on the benefits and risks in relation to complementary therapy. It also identifies the need for further research in the field as the specific mechanism of action when using cabbage and clay remains unclear and there is currently little reliable literature available.