

Audit into breast cancer care

Physiotherapists are helping a specialist team of clinicians to assess the provision of care to women with breast cancer who undergo mastectomy and breast reconstruction surgery in England and Wales.

Initial findings from the four-year national mastectomy and breast reconstruction audit show the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer has risen steadily in the last 10 years but there has been 'little improvement' in access to immediate reconstruction after mastectomy.

The 'world-first' audit, launched in January, has been commissioned and funded by the Healthcare Commission to improve the quality of care.

It was set up to examine current provision and access to services, evaluate clinical practice and measure outcomes following surgery.

Kate Jones and Helen Macleod, clinical

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HELEN MACLEOD

specialist physios at Royal Marsden hospital, are representing the CSP on the clinical reference group.

Ms Jones said: 'It's highly relevant to establish whether patients have access to physiotherapy from the first

perioperative day.'

They have submitted proposals on how physiotherapy should be assessed as part of data on clinical and patient outcomes.

'It is important that physiotherapy is seen as a factor that influences outcome,' Ms Jones added.

They have also commented on questionnaires aimed at patients, asking about satisfaction with reconstruction.

'There wasn't a lot of reference to physio so we queried that,' Ms Macleod said, 'and there wasn't a question asking if patients experiencing pain had accessed any services.'

The audit is due for completion in December 2010. ← LOUISE HUNT

This cushion's made for walking

Jackets to keep the Polish army warm inspired an invention by a Midlands physiotherapist. Her brainchild could soon be sold around the world.

Jill Parker, commercial physiotherapy manager at the Apley clinic, Princess Royal hospital, Telford, heard about a self-inflating cellular polymer substance used in coats and also inflatable beds, from her brother, an engineer in Poland.

This was the beginning of a seven-year process that has finally seen the Physio-Master foot cushion enter production, with help from a scheme to encourage NHS staff to develop their inventions.

Ms Parker, who works for the Shrewsbury and Telford hospital trust, discovered that the foot cushion would replicate the action of walking, and thus stimulate circulation to help patients with deep vein thrombosis. It is also said to improve proprioception to help balance reactions, working as effec-

tively as a wobble board, but at a much lower cost.

None of the medical device manufacturers she approached was interested. However, she then learned of MidTECH, the NHS Innovations hub in the Midlands.

The Physio-Master finally went on sale in November after years of tests, and a firm in the USA is already showing interest. 'I've spent hours and hours of my own time on developing this, and if I make any money it will be a bonus,' Ms Parker said. 'Ultimately it's about seeing the clinical possibilities and producing something worthwhile.'

← GRAHAM CLEWS

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Jill Parker at the launch of Physio-Master, with MidTECH chief executive David Gleaves