

Title:

Breast Lymphoedema: Steps Towards a Consensus-Based Definition

Abstract:

Breast lymphoedema is a complication that may occur in patients treated for breast cancer with breast conservation therapy. The incidence, degree, time course and symptoms of breast lymphoedema are not well understood. One barrier to research and reporting of breast lymphoedema is the lack of a clear and widely accepted definition of the condition (1). Unless clearly recognised definitions are created, detection may not occur at the earliest opportunity leading to a failure to initiate appropriate management and/ or treatment (2). Establishing a definition of breast lymphoedema will facilitate uniformity in identifying patients with breast lymphoedema that will be advantageous in clinical and research settings. A limitation to developing a definition is the limited number of objective measures that may be incorporated. To address these issues, we have invited a group of Australian clinicians and experts in the field of lymphology to participate in a forum to discuss how breast lymphoedema may be defined and all of the issues influencing this. The aim is to work towards a consensus of criteria that may be used to define breast lymphoedema.

Based on a review of the literature, items for discussion will include the nature, location and the timing of breast lymphoedema. Other items may become apparent during discussion. A synopsis and the consensus of these discussions will be presented.

References

Williams AF, Franks PJ, Moffat CJ (2005) Lymphoedema: estimating the size of the problem. *Palliative Medicine* 19: 300-313.

Ward, L (2009) Early detection of lymphoedema: Is BIS ready for prime time as the gold standard. 22nd International Congress of Lymphology, Sydney. Abstract Book pp 90.