

LIPDEMA, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT ACCORDING TO THE NEW DUTCH GUIDELINE (2014).

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Lipedema is a chronic, progressive condition that can result in considerable disability, problems in daily functioning, and psychosocial difficulties. Because of the absence of robust diagnostic criteria, lipedema is frequently unrecognized or misdiagnosed as obesity. In addition, therapy varies and success lacks. Lipedema is not listed in the ICD 10 classification.

With the publication of the Dutch multidisciplinary guideline “Lipedema” in 2014, a major step has been made to improve the recognition and acknowledgement of the diagnosis. Patients have been involved during the realization of the guideline, to ensure their commitment.

Due to the variations of phenotype and the variety of subjective complaints in lipedema, attention for the medical diagnostic criteria alone is not sufficient to ensure an early diagnosis and therapy. Besides these medical criteria, the guideline advises the use of a minimum data set including biomedical and psycho-social parameters such as circumference and volumetric measurements of the involved limbs, body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, muscle strength, physical condition, the daily activity level, psychosocial distress measurements and Quality of Life. In this way medical outcomes are combined with functional outcome measurements.

The treatment of lipedema is divided into conservative and surgical approach. The main targets of the conservative treatment is to (re-)gain a healthy lifestyle and to improve physical conditions. Treatment components are weight control, graded activity training programs, optimization of the vascular/lymphatic pump, edema reduction and other supportive measures, such as psychosocial therapy. The disproportional figuration of the body will not be resolved, although the obesity component will be.

The only available technique to correct the abnormal adipose tissue is surgery, which is reserved for the more severe cases to reduce functional impairments. This treatment should take place in specialized clinics with multidisciplinary cooperation and follow-up. Super tumescent liposuction is also an effective way of removing fat, although it is still under discussion if the technique is considered a cosmetically desired or a medical necessity.

The Dutch Expertise Centre embraces this functional, patient-centered approach, focusing on early diagnosis and follow-up with tailored treatment and support.

