

28 May 2021

Pilot program to prevent lymphoedema in cancer patients

Breast cancer patients at south western Sydney hospitals are expected to benefit from a pilot program designed to detect and prevent a condition which causes severe pain and swelling.

South Western Sydney Local Health District is one of 13 Districts in NSW to be part of the Commonwealth-funded Early Intervention and Prevention of Chronic Lymphoedema program.

Lymphoedema is a condition which usually affects people who have had surgery to remove lymph nodes as part of the management of cancer, in particular breast cancer.

The District's Chief Executive Amanda Larkin said staff will screen and assess 430 people each year who have undergone breast cancer surgery to check for the early stages of lymphoedema.

"The pilot program will include the Lymphoedema clinics at Campbelltown, Liverpool and Bowral & District hospitals as well as a new clinic at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital," Ms Larkin said.

"It will build on the success of our well-established clinics, which have been treating people in the community with a known risk of lymphoedema for 18 years.

"We have been running a similar model of care at Campbelltown Hospital for eight years and in that time we have seen how effective early intervention for lymphoedema can be."

An additional four Allied Health staff across the District have undergone training in lymphoedema therapy as part of the pilot.

Three additional SOZO Body Composition Analyser Machines have also been provided for the District to support the detection and treatment of the early stages of lymphoedema.

This brings the total number of SOZO machines across the District to six.

NSW Chief Allied Health Officer Andrew Davison said: "Lymphoedema is a lifelong, chronic condition that can be debilitating and affects many breast cancer survivors."

The pilot, which is funded through the Lymphoedema Garments and Allied Health Therapy program, will run until June 2024.