

EXPLORING PATIENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE ACCEPTABILITY OF LARVAL THERAPY AS A POTENTIAL TREATMENT FOR VENOUS LEG ULCERATION

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Aim: Larval therapy is frequently used to treat patients with leg ulcers. However, the acceptability of larval therapy to patients is not established. This study aimed to explore perceptions of acceptability of larval therapy with a group of patients with a venous leg ulcer attending a UK Hospital Vascular Outpatients Clinic.

Method: As part of a pragmatic RCT, comparing clinical and cost effectiveness of larval therapy ('bagged' and 'loose') with hydrogel, we conducted a sub-study of patient acceptability. A questionnaire, which asked patients about either 'bagged' or 'loose' larvae, was administered by a nurse researcher. Participants were encouraged to verbalise their considerations when responding to a question. This generated qualitative data which were analysed for thematic content.

Results: Thirty-five participants, aged 18 years and above, with at least one venous leg ulcer were interviewed. The majority (77%) of participants stated they would consider larval therapy, irrespective of method of containment. Acceptance of therapy was influenced by length of time with ulcer or repeated incidence, experiences of other treatments, social contact in hospitals and the experiences of others. Visual imagery was a key influence among participants who would refuse larval therapy. Refusal was mostly among older women (aged 70 years or above).

Discussion: Eliciting patient preferences and increasing patient involvement in treatment decisions is an important part of quality improvement and improved health outcomes. These findings have important implications for practitioners offering larval therapy as a treatment option and for the feasibility of clinical trials.