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## **For Millions of Cancer Survivors, Life-Long Lymphedema Follows**

Many survivors lack access to the medical supplies they need to live well.

**WASHINGTON, D.C. [February 4, 2021, World Cancer Day]** This year in America, an estimated 1.8 million cases of cancer will be diagnosed. As survivorship increases, so too does the prevalence of cancer-related lymphedema. This chronic and potentially debilitating disease requires daily life-long management and affects 2 out of 5 breast cancer survivors, and 15% of cancer survivors overall.

Lymphedema is one of the most significant survivorship issues, and yet, due to a technicality, Medicare is currently unable to provide coverage for the compression garments and supplies that are the cornerstone of lymphedema treatment. Consequently, the many other insurance plans in the U.S. that align their coverage policies with that of the Medicare program fail to cover these essential medical supplies as well.

The **Lymphedema Treatment Act**, championed by Senator Maria Cantwell (WA) and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-9), will amend Medicare statute to create a benefit category under which these medically necessary, prescribed supplies can be covered. The bill has not yet been introduced in to the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, but in each of the last two Congresses this bipartisan and bicameral legislation has been widely supported, garnering over 450 House and Senate cosponsors each session.

*“Millions of Americans are living with lymphedema, and it’s critical that we help them receive the treatments they need,”* said Senator Cantwell. *“That’s why I will be re-introducing the Lymphedema Treatment Act, which takes a commonsense step forward to improve care for lymphedema patients who use Medicare Part B, while also reducing costly hospitalizations. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on this issue, and other ways to help those battling cancer.”*

*“Lymphedema is physically painful, and the cost of treatment can be prohibitively expensive. Granting Medicare coverage for treatment such as compression garments significantly expands access to much needed relief for those suffering from this challenging disease. Lymphedema isn’t a choice. Access to care shouldn’t be either,”* says Congresswoman Schakowsky.

Especially in the midst of a pandemic, access to the medical supplies that enable the 3-5 million Americans with lymphedema to safely manage their condition at home must be a priority. The use of medical compression has been shown to reduce lymphedema-related infections by more than 75% and reduce hospitalizations for this high-risk patient population by more than 50%.

**In recognition of World Cancer Day, the Lymphedema Advocacy Group is calling on Congress to include the Lymphedema Treatment Act in the first legislative package of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.**

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## About the Lymphedema Advocacy Group

The [Lymphedema Advocacy Group](#) is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization of patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals and industry partners. Our mission is to advance lymphedema care in the United States by advocating for improved insurance coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. The Lymphedema Advocacy Group is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization.

### Resources cited:

- 1.) <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/statistics>
- 2.) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2645852/>
- 3.) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20665892/>
- 4.) <https://acsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cncr.25458>
- 5.) <https://lymphedematreatmentact.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Impact-of-Lymphedema-on-Cancer-Survivors.pdf>
- 6.) <https://lymphedematreatmentact.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Function-of-Compression.pdf>
- 7.) [https://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Programs-and-Initiatives/Other-Insurance-Protections/whcra\\_factsheet](https://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Programs-and-Initiatives/Other-Insurance-Protections/whcra_factsheet)
- 8.) <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/518>
- 9.) <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1948>
- 10.) <http://lymphedematreatmentact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Lymphedema-Not-One-Disease.pdf>
- 11.) <https://lymphedematreatmentact.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Reducing-Infections-and-Hospitalizations-Through-the-Use-of-Compression.pdf>