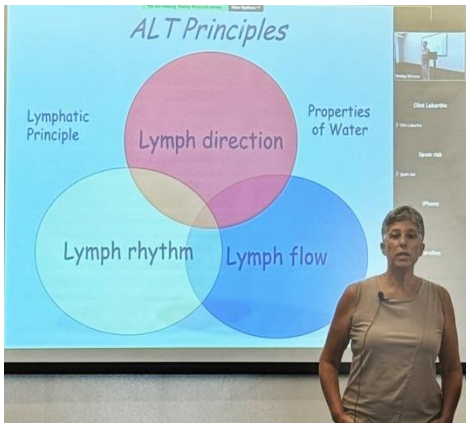


Aqua Lymphatic Therapy for the Management Of Lymphedema and Lipedema



Dorit Tidhar, MScPT, PhD, CSCI, ALT, shared her [Aqua Lymphatic Therapy](#) for the Management of Lymphedema in a pre-conference session with therapists as well as our main conference.

Dr. Tidhar developed Aqua Lymphatic Therapy (ALT) based on the Casley-Smith Lymphedema Management principles (www.casleymithinternational.com). ALT is not the typical “aquatics” therapists learn in school or that individuals have experienced in outpatient therapy centers. To develop this program, Dr. Tidhar incorporated the properties of water, the physiology of the lymphatic system, the pathology of lymphatic dysfunctions, and the principles of complete decongestive therapy (CDT).

Water has several properties that impact an individual by improving or hindering fluid movement; the main two are buoyancy and hydrostatic pressure. **Buoyancy** is the property that makes one feel lighter in water than on land. This allows an individual to do exercises in the pool with less stress on the joints and muscles and can help hold the involved limb(s) afloat. Water applies **hydrostatic pressure**, which has an effect similar to compression garments/bandages that assist in fluid movement. This pressure increases with each centimeter of depth a body part is submerged in the water. The properties of water can aid in treating difficult-to-compress areas, like the genitals or trunk/chest. The key with hydrostatic pressure and ALT is that one must follow the proximal to distal principles of CDT, i.e., not have higher pressure in the hand before working on the shoulder and upper arm.

The water temperature should be between 87.8° and 91.4° F for individuals with lymphedema, “should not make the skin red,” and may need to be lower when exercising. This provides a comfortable temperature without causing harm, specifically increased swelling.

ALT can benefit individuals with all stages of lymphedema and, to some extent, those with lipedema. Aquatics helps reduce tissue fluid and increase range of motion, strength, and general fitness. Other benefits from ALT are improved quality of life, reduced pain, and reduced disability scores. Dr. Tidhar shared several cases where individuals reduced in volume in the involved areas after participating in ALT 1-3 days a week. This



benefit occurred in both the reductive and maintenance phases of CDT. Two of our therapists noticed that their own lymphedema reduced within 24 hours of attending Dr. Tidhar's pre-conference course and pool sessions!

Aquatics does not address the texture of the tissues, like fibrosclerosis or adipose laydown. As with all forms of therapy, there are some precautions/contraindications with aquatic therapy. These include, but are not limited to, infection/cellulitis, chemotherapy, skin sensitivity/rash, bone metastatic disease, paralysis/weakness, fear of water, cardiac conditions, kidney disease, and open wounds. Individuals need to discuss the appropriateness of aquatics with their healthcare professionals before adding aquatics to their treatment regimen.

Aqua Lymphatic Therapy is pleasant for patients, encouraging their long-term lymphedema maintenance. Sixteen certified lymphedema therapists attended the pre-conference 6-hour course with Dr. Tidhar and experienced her upper and lower extremity pool programs. All therapists gave glowing reviews of the programs and felt ALT would benefit their patients. Therapists hope to bring Dr. Tidhar back soon to present the complete Aquatic Lymphatic Therapy Certification Course.



For more information on this program, visit the website: www.aqua-lymphatic-therapy.org.

~Reviewed by Conference Chair, Shelley DiCecco, PT, PhD, CLT-LANA, CI-CS

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Lighthouse Lymphedema Network is a 501(c)(3) organization with the goals of educating, increasing awareness and providing support for individuals who have lymphedema or have an interest in lymphedema. All donations are tax-deductible. [Donate](#) now.