

Low-Level Laser Therapy and Breast Cancer Related Lymphedema Study

Low-level laser therapy (LLLT) devices are infra-red lasers, which generate light of a specific wavelength that is able to deeply penetrate the tissue without an increase in tissue temperature. These devices have been introduced to the U.S. market as an additional treatment option for lymphedema, and were cleared by the FDA in 2006.

Several recent studies suggest that low-level laser therapy may be effective in reducing lymphedema circumference for some women, and may be beneficial in softening of hard tissue in the involved extremity and decrease of pain. While LLLT has shown some promise in relieving some of the symptoms of lymphedema, the exact mechanism by which these effects may be achieved is not clear and evidence for the effectiveness of LLLT is limited.

To confirm the usefulness of LLLT as an adjunct modality in the treatment of lymphedema, more studies are necessary.

During the National Lymphedema Network Conference in Orlando last week, I was asked by my friend Ellen Poage to share with you an invitation to breast cancer survivors with arm lymphedema to participate in a randomized research study on the effects of LLLT. This study is funded by a grant from the Oncology Nursing Society Foundation. If you have lymphedema of the arm, and interested to participate in this important study, here is the information:

Who is invited?

Breast cancer survivors with lymphedema of the arm.

About 90 women ages 21 and older are expected to participate. The study will take between two to six weeks depending on the individual participants' response.

Where is the study site?

Rehabilitation Associates of Naples have two study sites, located in Naples, FL, and Ft. Myers, FL

Why is this study conducted?

To see if three types of lymphedema treatment currently in use by Rehabilitation Associates of Naples all work about the same, or if some work better than others. Specifically, the study wants to determine if low-level laser therapy alone or when administered in combination with Manual Lymph Drainage works better than Manual Lymph Drainage by itself.

Who are the study principals?

Sheila Ridner, PhD, RN – Vanderbilt University School of Nursing
Ellen Poage, ARNP, CLT-LANA – Rehabilitation Associates of Naples
Colin Kanar, MD - Rehabilitation Associates of Naples

Who to contact for further information if you are interested?

**Colin Canar, MD, or Ellen Poage, ARNP, CLT-LANA at
(239) 593-0918**

More information on low-level laser therapy can be found here:

<http://www.lymphedemapeople.com/phpBB3/viewtopic.php?t=114>

<http://www.lymphnet.org/newsletter/articles.htm>

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cncr.11641/pdf>

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/d2216586q54q2351/>

<http://www.schwa-medico.com/en-news/studies/low-level-laser-therapy-in-the-treatment-of-chronic-lymphedema.html>