

Bandages and beyond!

On Wednesday 16th September many WI members arrived at our monthly WI meeting looking forward to another good evening but not quite sure what we were coming to hear about.....!



We were soon enlightened and fascinated by our speaker, Emma Taylor, who is based at a Shepshed factory as the Operations Manager for a company making textiles and materials to treat wounds, help prevent skin breakdown and prevent venous thrombosis in the legs. All the hosiery and compression bandages produced by Emma's company are made in Shepshed. The products are distributed world-wide but in the UK they are primarily used by the NHS and only their level one compression hosiery, is available in chemists.

Career development

Emma described her career path from customer service work via supply chain appointments to her appointment, 5 years ago, to the senior management post of Operations Manager with her present employer. As her career in the supply chain area progressed, she moved from one company to another developing and honing her skills. She found she thrived on pressure at work, motivating and leading teams or keeping them on track while shouldering increasing responsibilities. When Emma started her current job 80% of the leadership team were men and her appointment raised some surprise but she was soon accepted. Today the small Leadership team is 75% female.

Emma says many women have the transferable skills required to perform well in a work environment such as she has chosen. She believes many women possess the ability to empathise with staff, help resolve personal and interpersonal problems, tensions or conflict in a team, whilst being supportive and motivational or keeping people in line.

A textile factory for 98 years

The factory where Emma is based has been producing textiles since 1928. It is owned by a French company with a French production site and research and development arm but all their products are distributed via the UK. Emma's role includes responsibility for Health and Safety so she ensures that the material weaving areas are kept clean and production standards are maintained everywhere. It requires meticulous care and precision for a single weaving machine to be fed, simultaneously, from up to 6,000 separate yarn packages!

Impressive statistics

As well as standard pressure-stockings the factory produces 100,000 pairs of individual made-to-measure pressure-stockings each year, priding itself on the rapid turn-around for these. They produce over 20 million bandages of varying compression levels to help prevent and manage skin break down on the legs and they make around 500,000 pairs of anti-embolism stockings a year, to

be used in the prevention of leg vein thromboses. The company is continually improving and simplifying their products to reduce the expertise required by those applying them

Wounds

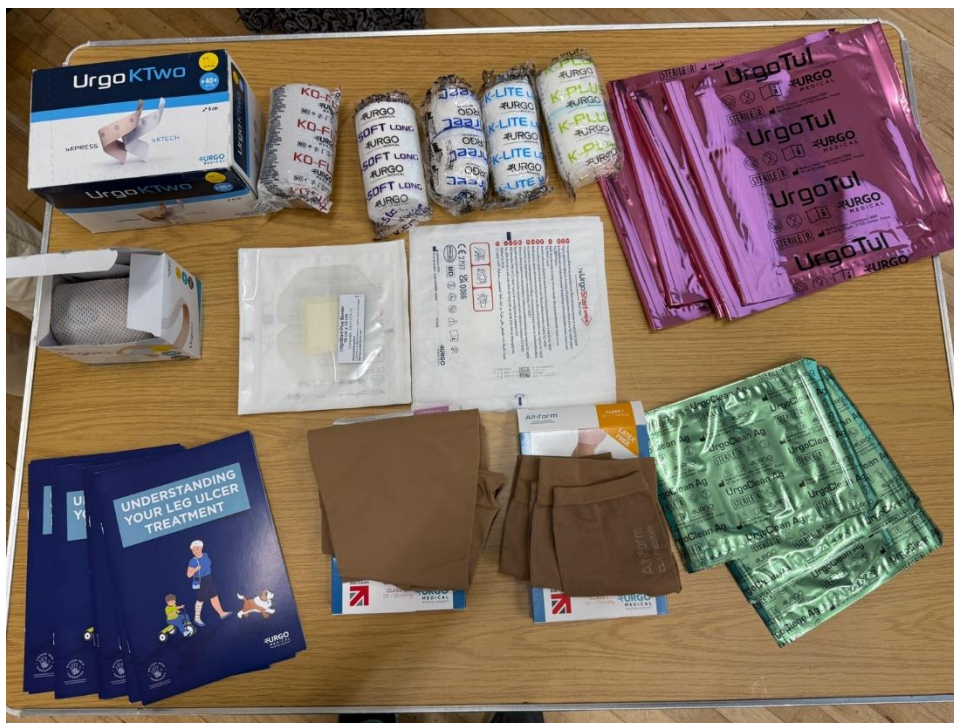
Emma explained that most acute wounds are from trauma, burns and scalds, post operative wounds etc and these usually heal within six weeks. If a wound persists for longer it may become chronic such as chronic leg ulcers. Chronic wound management costs a lot in person hours, treatment expenses and discomfort to the patient etc.

'Squeeze and heal' - compression bandages and stockings:

Compression bandages and stockings are used to prevent and treat lower leg skin problems by reducing swelling and improving lower leg circulation. They may be required life-long.

Technically advanced dressings for chronic wounds

Emma passed around samples of two, prescription only, sterile dressings. One a delicate mesh dressing which, placed directly onto weeping wounds, keeps the wound optimally moist for healing. It forms a gel with wound exudate and facilitates faster healing, reduced dressing frequency and painless removal without surface damage. The other specialised dressing for infected wounds is thicker, with amazing properties; it is non-adherent, extracts and traps infectious organisms, particles of foreign material, pus etc and holds them in its mesh to be removed with the dressing.



Finishing up the evening

After answering many questions from her captivated audience, Emma was thanked for her fascinating presentation and her audience departed very sure of what they had heard and learned about! Incidentally, this topic would have thrilled the promoters of the WI at the end of the first World War when educating women to nurse their wounded menfolk was much on their minds.

Susan Young