



AUSTRALIAN
INSTITUTE OF
LYMPHOEDEMA



CANpractice by the
Australian Institute of Lymphoedema
Competency Standards for
Lymphoedema Practitioners

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Introduction

The Casley-Smith Method for the treatment of lymphoedema was the original Australian method for the treatment of lymphoedema.¹ The four principles of this method, known as Complex Physical Therapy, are skin care, manual lymphatic drainage, exercise and compression in the form of bandaging, garments and pumps.² Medical devices can also be used such as low-level laser and negative pressure.

The Competency Standards described in this document are based off the Australasian's Lymphology Association's (ALA) Competency framework for Lymphoedema Practitioners (developed in 2019) which described the knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities required of ALA Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioners. The lymphoedema course provided by the Australian Institute of Lymphoedema, CANpractice, is accredited by the ALA.

CANpractice is 135 hours and is recognised by the following organisations.



Reference:

1. Casley-Smith JR, Casley-Smith JR. Complex physical therapy; the first 200 Australian limbs. Australian Journal of Dermatology. 1992;33:61-8
2. Casley-Smith JR, Boris M, Weindorf S, Lasinski B. Treatment for lymphedema of the arm-The Casley-Smith method: A noninvasive method produces continued reduction. Cancer: Interdisciplinary International Journal of the American Cancer Society. 1998 Dec 15;83(S12B):2843-60.

1. Maintain capability for practice

Element	Performance criteria
<p>1.1 Assume responsibility for self-directed learning and continuing professional development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain referral networks and other relationships relevant to Complex Physical Therapy • Review and develop professional knowledge and skills as relevant to lymphoedema management • Proactively seek and respond to professional development opportunities • Demonstrate awareness for accreditation / recognition of lymphoedema qualifications re- accreditation requirements (i.e., AHPRA requirements) • Ensure professional insurance is kept up to date <p>It is the practitioner’s responsibility to be aware of and comply with national laws, the standards, guidelines and policies of their national board / professional association and insurance provider.</p>
<p>1.2 Evaluate and maintain own personal health to ensure safe, professional practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate ability for self-reflection of professional practice • Demonstrate awareness of the potential psychological impact of caring for persons with lymphoedema • Arrange for professional mentoring / debriefing

2. Person-centred service

Element	Performance criteria
2.1 Empower self - management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education on risk reduction based on evidence based published literature and relevant Position Statements of respected organisations • Demonstrate ability to modify components of Complex Physical Therapy when required to assist with self or carer administration of the treatment modality
2.2 Deliver services that are culturally safe and responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and communicate with clients and colleagues in a way that is respectful of a person's dignity, culture, beliefs and values
2.3 Use person-centred communication to maximise the therapeutic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate use of clear communication tailored to the person and their sociocultural context (e.g., use language that the client will understand)
2.4 Recognise barriers to patient engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the individual's psychosocial factors and identify any necessity for referral for psychological or social services • Identify psychosocial issues, which may pose a barrier to engagement or treatment adherence • Describe ways to motivate the individual

3. Foundational knowledge

Element	Performance criteria
3.1 Understand lymphatic anatomy, physiology and function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="608 327 1362 405">• Explain lymphatic anatomy (gross structure and fine structure) and lymphatic function<li data-bbox="608 427 1362 551">• Explain the theory of microcirculation (such as fluid exchange in tissues, modified Starling's equilibrium and microcirculation imbalances)
3.2 Understand types or causes of oedema and lymphoedema and associated conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="608 573 1337 651">• Define and differentiate between types of oedemas, such as primary, secondary, venous and lipoedema

4. Clinical assessment

Element	Performance criteria
4.1 Understand factors that affect the lymphatic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document patient and family history of lymphoedema or oedema • Inquire about and document any factors that may increase lymph obligatory load e.g. diuretics or medication and/or other medical conditions • Inquire about and explain risk factors for oedema progression e.g. sedentary lifestyle, high BMI
4.2 Understand theory of assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the use of assessment tools such as the tape measure, bioimpedance spectroscopy and palpation
4.3 Understand why and when to use imaging assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the application of imaging assessments in practice, e.g. indocyanine green (ICG) lymphography, ultrasound/Doppler, lymphoscintigraphy and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
4.4 Plan assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply clinical reasoning to plan for appropriate assessments based on foundational knowledge, patient’s history, subjective assessment and other assessments. • Demonstrate consideration of assessment of adjacent regions • Demonstrate consideration of co-morbidities
4.5 Interpret and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate between normal/abnormal findings • Use clinical reasoning to interpret assessment findings • Classify lymphoedema using classification from various sources, including the International Society of Lymphology (ISL), World Health Organization (WHO), and International Lymphoedema Framework (ILF)

Clinical assessment (Head and neck)

4.6 Obtain and document a comprehensive medical history	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to take a comprehensive, clearly documented biopsychosocial history from the patient
4.7 Perform appropriate subjective assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct assessment of symptoms and quality of life
4.8 Perform appropriate objective measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to perform relevant objective lymphoedema measurements accurately• Demonstrate consideration of other general tests, such as range of motion for the head and neck• Conduct assessment of adjacent regions or refer patient for further assessment
4.9 Interpret and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate between normal/abnormal findings• Use clinical reasoning to explore and explain the causes of the presenting problem• Identify any need for referral to other supporting healthcare professionals

Clinical assessment (Upper limb)

4.10 Obtain and document a comprehensive medical history	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to take a comprehensive, clearly documented biopsychosocial history from the patient
4.11 Perform appropriate subjective assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct assessment of symptoms and quality of life
4.12 Perform appropriate objective measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to perform relevant objective lymphoedema measurements accurately• Demonstrate consideration of other general tests, such as range of motion for the upper limbs• Conduct assessment of adjacent region of the lymphatic system or refer patient for further assessment
4.13 Interpret and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate between normal/abnormal findings• Use clinical reasoning to explore and explain the causes of the presenting problem• Identify any need for referral to other supporting healthcare professionals

Clinical assessment (Breast and trunk)

4.14 Obtain and document a comprehensive medical history	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to take a comprehensive, clearly documented biopsychosocial history from the patient
4.15 Perform appropriate subjective assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct assessment of symptoms and quality of life
4.16 Perform appropriate objective measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe how to perform relevant objective lymphoedema measurements accurately• Demonstrate consideration of other general tests, such as range of motion for the trunk• Conduct assessment of adjacent regions or refer patient for further assessment
4.17 Interpret and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate between normal/abnormal findings• Use clinical reasoning to explore and explain the causes of the presenting problem• Identify any need for referral to other supporting healthcare professionals

Clinical assessment (Genital and abdomen)

4.18 Obtain and document a comprehensive medical history	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to take a comprehensive, clearly documented biopsychosocial history from the patient
4.19 Perform appropriate subjective assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct assessment of symptoms and quality of life
4.20 Perform appropriate objective measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe how to perform relevant objective lymphoedema measurements accurately• Demonstrate consideration of other general tests• Conduct assessment of adjacent regions or refer patient for further assessment
4.21 Interpret and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate between normal/abnormal findings• Use clinical reasoning to explore and explain the causes of the presenting problem• Identify any need for referral to other supporting healthcare professionals

Clinical assessment (Lower limb)

4.22 Obtain and document a comprehensive medical history	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to take a comprehensive, clearly documented biopsychosocial history from the patient
4.23 Perform appropriate subjective assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct assessment of symptoms and quality of life
4.24 Perform appropriate objective measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to perform relevant objective lymphoedema measurements accurately• Explain the use of ankle brachial pressure index (ABPI)• Demonstrate consideration of other general tests, such as range of motion for the lower limbs• Conduct assessment of adjacent regions or refer patient for further assessment
4.25 Interpret and evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiate between normal/abnormal findings• Use clinical reasoning to explore and explain the causes of the presenting problem• Identify any need for referral to other supporting healthcare professionals

5. Treatment planning

Element	Performance criteria
5.1 Understand theory for treatment modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain theory and principles of complex lymphoedema therapy including specialist lymphatic drainage massage, multilayer compression bandaging, wraps and compression garments, skin care, exercise and education, and adjunct therapies
5.2 Develop a rationale for a treatment plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify assessment findings and use them to develop a treatment plan with the patient and/or carer
5.3 Incorporate a risk assessment approach in treatment planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any contraindications and need for precautions, e.g. in paediatric patients or patients who are pregnant, elderly, morbidly obese, have advanced metastatic disease, whose condition is palliative or have mixed oedemas
5.4 Apply principles of chronic disease management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate an approach that focuses on the patient's concerns and priorities, supports patient self-management and arranges follow-up or referral as required
5.5 Tailor management to the condition and patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate consideration of phase of treatment – prevention, reduction or maintenance Consider underlying conditions Consider co-morbidities that may contribute to oedema or contraindicate treatment
5.6 Monitor and evaluate treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate client progress and seek client feedback about treatment impact and adherence with the treatment plan Evaluate treatment impact on the patient's wellbeing Compare changes and improvements with expectations in the treatment plan, existing research and evidence from own practice Adjust treatment based on evaluation Identify and respond to factors that may be inhibiting client progress

6. Treatment modalities

Treatment modalities (Head and neck)

Element	Performance criteria
6.1 Perform specialist lymphatic drainage massage for head and neck safely and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe indications and contraindications Demonstrate safe and effective lymphatic drainage massage techniques
6.2 Prescribe compression garments appropriately (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe indications and contraindications Compare and contrast compression garments Describe how to select a garment for an individual Describe alternative compression systems/night options
6.3 Prescribe exercise appropriately (lymphatic and general exercise program, as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the theory and demonstrate appropriate exercises Identify cautions and contraindications to exercise
6.4 Provide advice on skin care regimen (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe skin care to optimise the condition of the skin, reverse skin changes and prevent infections
6.5 Provide advice and /or prescribe adjunct therapy (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the use of adjunct therapies such as laser therapy, taping and others

Treatment modalities (Upper limb)

Element	Performance criteria
6.6 Perform specialist lymphatic drainage massage for upper limb safely and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate safe and effective lymphatic drainage massage techniques
6.7 Apply compression bandaging safely and effectively (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate bandaging techniques safely and effectively • Describe scenarios calling for, and methods of, modifications to bandaging
6.8 Prescribe compression garments appropriately (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Compare and contrast compression garments • Describe how to select a garment for an individual • Describe alternative compression systems/night options
6.9 Prescribe exercise appropriately (lymphatic and general exercise program, as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the theory and demonstrate appropriate exercise • Perform lymphatic stimulatory exercises to promote muscle activity in the upper limb • Identify cautions and contraindications to exercise
6.10 Provide advice on skin care regimen (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe skin care to optimise the condition of the skin, reverse skin changes and prevent infections
6.11 Provide advice and /or prescribe adjunct therapy (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the use of adjunct therapies such as laser therapy, taping, surgical treatment, compression pumps and others

Treatment modalities (Breast and trunk)

Element	Performance criteria
6.12 Perform specialist lymphatic drainage massage for the breast and trunk safely and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate safe and effective lymphatic drainage massage techniques
6.13 Apply compression bandaging safely and effectively (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate safe and effective bandaging techniques • Describe scenarios calling for, and methods of, modifications to bandaging
6.14 Prescribe compression garments appropriately (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Compare and contrast compression garments • Describe how to select a garment for an individual • Describe alternative compression systems/night options
6.15 Prescribe exercise appropriately (lymphatic and general exercise program, as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the theory and demonstrate appropriate exercise, including breast exercise and trunk rotation exercises • Identify cautions and contraindications to exercise
6.16 Provide advice on skin care regimen (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe skin care to optimise the condition of the skin, reverse skin changes and prevent infections
6.17 Provide advice and /or prescribe adjunct therapy (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the use of adjunct therapies such as laser therapy, taping, surgical treatment, compression pumps and others

Treatment modalities (Genital and abdomen)

Element	Performance criteria
6.18 Perform specialist lymphatic drainage massage of the genital region and abdomen safely and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate safe and effective lymphatic drainage massage techniques
6.19 Apply compression bandaging safely and effectively (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate bandaging techniques • Describe scenarios calling for, and methods of, modifications to bandaging
6.20 Prescribe compression garments and genital support appropriately (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Compare and contrast compression garments • Describe how to select a garment for an individual • Describe alternative compression systems/night options
6.21 Prescribe exercise appropriately (lymphatic and general exercise program, as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the theory and demonstrate appropriate exercise • Identify cautions and contraindications to exercise
6.22 Provide advice on skin care regimen (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe skin care to optimise the condition of the skin, reverse skin changes and prevent infections
6.23 Provide advice and /or prescribe adjunct therapy (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the use of adjunct therapies such as laser therapy, taping and others

Treatment modalities (Lower limb)

Element	Performance criteria
6.24 Perform specialist lymphatic drainage massage for lower limb safely and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate safe and effective lymphatic drainage massage techniques
6.25 Apply compression bandaging safely and effectively (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Demonstrate safe and effective bandaging techniques • Describe scenarios calling for, and methods of, modifications to bandaging
6.26 Prescribe compression garments appropriately (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe indications and contraindications • Compare and contrast compression garments • Describe how to select a garment for an individual • Describe alternative compression systems/night options
6.27 Prescribe exercise appropriately (lymphatic and general exercise program, as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the theory and demonstrate appropriate exercise • Perform lymphatic stimulatory exercises to promote muscle activity in the lower limb • Identify cautions and contraindications to exercise
6.28 Provide advice on skin care regimen (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe skin care to optimise the condition of the skin, reverse skin changes and prevent infections
6.29 Provide advice and /or prescribe adjunct therapy (as appropriate to scope of practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the use of adjunct therapies such as laser therapy, taping, surgical treatment, compression pumps and others