

The Halifax Herald - Voice of the People

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Re: "Should be covered" (Dec. 14 letter). It was heartbreaking to read about Carol Waller's experience in battling lymphedema and the treatment limits placed on her by our cash-strapped health system. Often, some of the most stressful realities of a breast cancer diagnosis are of a financial nature.

It's important for breast cancer patients to know that there is help available from Halifax On The Front Line Society (breast cancer fund). Perhaps, better known for their annual Titz 'n' Glitz fundraiser, Halifax On The Front Line provides short-term financial assistance to women and men in financial need, who have been diagnosed with breast cancer and are living in Nova Scotia. This fund does not pay for research but instead provides money for groceries, drugs not covered by insurance, child care, lymphedema sleeves and so much more.

Carol, and others dealing with the financial realities of a breast cancer diagnosis can access the fund by contacting the health district in their area. Visit www.titznglitz.com for detailed contact information. All names and medical records are kept confidential.

Valerie Dubois, President,
Halifax On The Front Line Society (breast cancer fund), Halifax

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Should be covered

In 2002, I had breast cancer, with lymph removal and chemo. Two years later, I developed lymphedema in my arm and hand from the surgery.

Lymphedema is swelling in an area of your body that can occur if parts of your lymph system are not working properly. The main work of the lymphatic system is to protect you from infections.

If lymphedema is not treated, it can cause life-threatening problems like cellulitis, bacterial infections and lymphangitis.

Our health care system does not pay for treatment (manual lymph drainage) at \$75 an hour when needed, nor for lymphedema garments which can cost up to \$450 every six months to a year for the sleeve and glove, nor for the bandaging.

The Canadian Cancer Society does not help with my lymphedema even though it was caused by breast cancer.

This has been harder for me to deal with than breast cancer. There is no cure but with proper management, it can be controlled. The stress of worrying about how I can get treatments and garments has taken a toll on me.

If our health care system covered what we need, it would save the system a lot of money spent caring for patients being hospitalized from infections.

I pray the government will cover lymphedema, as it is a lifelong struggle for us.

Carol Waller, Truro

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