

2006 NLN Conference LSAP Review

By Martha Domont

As one of five new Lymph Science Advocacy Program (LSAP) candidates and also a recent Breast Cancer Survivor with transitory lymphedema, I am extremely grateful to have attended the 2006 NLN Conference in Nashville, titled "*Lymphedema: The Search for Truth.*"

Prior to the Conference, we all participated in three online seminars to prepare for the scientific meeting. The seminars helped us gain better understanding of the research process and collaborating directly with the professionals during plenary and instructional sessions.

Being in the midst of over 675 international healthcare professionals along with laypersons like myself—all who work tirelessly on behalf of lymphedema sufferers—was an eye opening, educational and heartwarming experience. The collaborative effort of physicians, researchers, nurses, therapists, scientists, geneticists, advocates and exhibitors gives us hope of finding a cure for lymphedema or, at the very least, of gaining a better understanding of the lymph system and lymphatic disorders and what we can do about them. We listened to doctors and therapists share their research and findings, successes and frustrations, then answer questions about techniques and concerns. It occurred to me that in this age of gigabytes and microchips, there is still much to learn about the human anatomy and its interconnecting functions. They showed us how imperative it is that we work with the governing medical bodies to get a more comprehensive teaching of lymphology added to the medical schools curriculum.

What I think impressed all who attended was the degree of dedication by the LE therapists who also have to be massage therapists, nurses, teach-

disorders and to be, in the words of Prof. Neil Piller, "*skeptical, but not cynical*" in their search for the truth. Time is of the essence to bridge the intellectual and scientific gap in the medical profession regarding LE. We must continue to be



encouraged that answers are being uncovered.

My fellow advocates challenged me with their tireless work. There was a willingness to grow and start new LE support groups; continue fighting the important legal battles to secure funding for LE treatments and materials; increase the sharing of ideas and breakthroughs on an international level; and commit to meeting the needs of parents who have children facing a lifetime of treatments from lymphatic disorders.

The entire Conference was motivating and brings forth new opportunities. As advocates, we are the conduit between those who suffer from and treat LE and the general public who may have never heard the term. It will require lots of effort, but the journey has begun. I know that it is already happening for me, through the Breast Cancer Awareness programs.

As the Conference came to a close, my brain felt like a giant swollen lymph node in need of gentle and complete decongestive therapy. However, through the advocacy program, there is an avenue through which the information can flow and spread out to the world.

My special thanks to my fellow LSAP