

Surgery of advanced lymphoedema

Harry Voesten, Alexander Lamprou

Although the gold standard in lymphoedema is non-operative compression therapy, in advanced stage surgery is inevitable.

As lymphedema can occur primary or secondary and unilaterally or bilaterally problems can be quite challenging:

The manifestations on different parts of the body can vary from pure volume difference, to weeping blisters, papillomatosis or erysipelas. Resulting problems in locomotion, social life, sexual function etc. all interfere with quality of life.

The only proven surgical method to reduce volume difference completely in extremities is circumferential suction-assisted lipectomy (CSAL) in combination with lifelong wearing of measured to fit compression garment.

Serious progress has been made in surgery of midline lymphedema , lymphekysts, weeping blisters, papillomatosis.

Even common surgical problems in lymphoedematous extremities can be treated by surgery without lymphoedema getting worse provided a good pre- and postoperative compression treatment is carried out in a clinical multidisciplinary setting.