

Elephantiasis overview 2



ELEPHANTIASIS OVERVIEW 2 Elephantiasis Overview As a home health assistant I came across a patient with a rare disease to which I was unaware of what it was. I had never seen anything like it before. This man was in his sixties and had lived with his parents. On my first day I had started giving him a bath. I had bathed his entire upper body and was ready to move to his lower half. He had these giant foam looking boots on. At the time I assumed it was a health reason that he had to wear them but had no idea exactly what they were for until I removed them from his feet. He sat down his dining room so could first remove these "special shoes". I removed the left one first and couldn't believe my eyes. His feet looked very similar to those of an elephant. Since he wasn't my regular patient and his original caregiver couldn't make it there, I had to see him quickly and hadn't been briefed on what his condition was. After carefully bathing his overly large, seemingly swollen looking, gray feet, I carefully examined them to see if he needed further care for them. The skin looked extremely dry and kind of wrinkled and thick. I finished up and headed to my car in confusion to what I had just seen. I called the nurse on his case and told her I had been filling in for her normal HHA and wanted to know what my patient's condition was. She said it was a rare disease known as elephantiasis. Elephantiasis is a condition where there is an abnormal enlargement of the body, usually pertaining to the limbs. Unfortunately another area sometimes affected by elephantiasis are the external genitals. It is caused by an obstruction of the lymphatic system. This results in the build up of a fluid called lymph that occurs in the affected areas.(1) First you must understand the lymphatic system. It protects the body against infection and disease. It is a system of tubular channels; also known as lymph vessels, that will drain lymph from many

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areas of the body into your bloodstream. If one of these lymph vessels get clogged or obstructed, it will cause that area of the body to "blow up" or swell thus creating elephantiasis. It is most commonly caused by a parasitic disease otherwise known as lymphatic filariasis. 3 Filariasis is an infectious tropical disease caused by several thread-like parasitic round worms. Where ever the infected area is, if its left untreated it can block the lymph flow.

Thus leading to elephantiasis. (2) ELEPHANTIASIS OVERVIEW ELEPHANTIASIS OVERVIEW 4 Resources (2012). Elephantiasis. WebMD. DOI: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/elephantiasis> (2012). Filariasis. WebMD. DOI: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/filariasis>