Updated Guidelines for Complex Regional Pain Syndrome

On the 23rd July the Royal College of Physicians released the second edition of their publication: Complex regional pain syndrome in adults: UK guidelines for the diagnosis, referral and management in primary and secondary care 2018

Myself, Miriam Parkinson (Occupational Therapist at Royal Blackburn) and Sharon Gillespie (Physiotherapist at Royal Liverpool) assisted in reviewing and updating relevant sections; acting as representatives of BAHT. We were honoured to be invited to the launch event at The House of Commons hosted by Iain Stewart MP.

These guidelines are a fantastic resource for clinicians working with individuals affected by acute or long term CRPS. There are 9 specialist sections: Primary care, OT/PT, Surgical practice, Emergency medicine, Rheumatology/neuro, Dermatology, Pain medicine, Rehabilitation medicine and Long term support. The appendices present a wealth of further resources, including patient information on desensitisation, post-fracture management, general patient information, diagnostic checklist etc. The guidelines can be accessed directly in PDF format via the Royal College of Physicians website. https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/file/10437/download?token=bpc-tZ9P

Whilst hand therapy does not have an exclusive section, the assessment and therapeutic approaches in the OT/PT section will be of benefit to hand therapists. As a specific promotion for hand therapy, an additional comment was added as a footnote in the Surgical Practice section stating that; ‘referral to a specialist hand therapy service, where available, is preferable for upper limb CRPS’. Also added for clarification; ‘in the UK, hand therapists are specialised PTs or OTs.’

The benefit to individual clinicians, as a resource for developing knowledge of best practice in assessment, management and referral is unquestionable. In addition, we would highly recommend that hand therapy services identify a ‘CRPS champion’; someone with a special interest in CRPS who can use this resource to review existing practice and/or promote best practice at therapy service level and within their trusts.

