

Barriers to self-managing foot care, how addressing these can improve quality of life and reduce needs for podiatry services.

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Background:

Public health podiatry service provision is often misunderstood by service planners and managers. Access to podiatry services are an issue due insufficient numbers of clinical positions and a high demand for service access. Barwon Health has been working with a group education model – meet your feet (MYF), for ten years, which is based on addressing patient self-care barriers using an active service model (ASM) approach. MYF has shown a 30 % reduction on reliance of podiatry services by participants due to barriers being addressed in this course which also have a broader impact on activities of daily living.

Methods:

In the development of MYF, a small patient focus group was utilised to explore the barriers to people self-managing their own foot care. A concurrent focus group was run with podiatrists to look at reported and perceptions of patients self-managing their foot care. These were then themed to provide a range of barriers which became the course framework.

Subsequently we have collected longitudinal data from the courses checking in each time on barriers to self-managing foot care which has been provided comparative data.

Results:

The longitudinal comparative data have shown that the themes which were identified as barriers with the initially are still the current barriers for clients now with no new specific themes arising.

Discussion.

The identified barriers to self-management of foot care were flexibility, equipment, foot problems which were perceived as a risk, knowledge and information, dexterity, vision, positioning and cognitive functioning. These themes are further validated by the collected longitudinal data from our courses. Furthermore, these themes have an impact on activities of daily living. What has been found is that addressing these barriers for foot care has also had a secondary effect (often dramatic) of improving clients own capacity for managing activities of daily living.