

An e- Health Approach to improving Diabetic Foot screening and Reducing amputations for people in rural South Australia.

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Australia's lower limb amputation rate as a consequence of diabetes is one of the worst in the developed world, with the highest rates reported in South Australia.

Background

The Australian national diabetes-related amputation data, captured in 2004/05, suggested an Australian amputation rate of 17 per 100,000.¹ Clearly, the National Diabetic Foot Disease Management Program 1998 action plan was not fulfilled and rather than a 50% reduction we have experienced an increase. Data reported from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suggests that one Australian loses a lower limb every 3 hours as a direct result of diabetes-related foot disease, an increase of approximately 30%. .8% of diabetes-related deaths are attributable to foot disease.² These statistics highlight the urgent need for strategies to reduce this significant burden on patients and our health system. While Australia's amputation rate has been increasing, Norway and Scotland have significantly reduced their amputation rate.³ A major strategy used by both these countries is the implementation of a widespread, consistent screening program with interventions targeted at the appropriate clinical risk of the client.

Method

Develop and implement a foot screening program suitable for the Australian context.

Consistent training is delivered by the Podiatrists working in Country South Australia to multiple disciplines. The program is underpinned by a central database with communication via online tools, including education modules and assessment tools accessible to health providers and patients to overcome geographical barriers to service.

Discussion

Our project has tested a model of care that is sustainable and able to be delivered across all geographical areas. Using this model it is possible to increase the foot screening rates and provide targeted intervention appropriate to the clinical risks of the individual. This project has the potential to significantly reduce the diabetes related amputation rate if rolled out across Australia.

References.

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3. Kennon B, Leese GP, Cochrane L et al. Reduced Incidence of Lower-Extremity Amputations in People With Diabetes in Scotland: A nationwide study. *Diabetes Care* 2012;35(12):2588-90