

New Study Proves Care by Podiatrists Dramatically Decreases Lower Limb Amputation

Research Results Presented at APMA's 98th Annual Scientific Meeting

Bethesda, MD – Essential foot care by a podiatrist has now been statistically proven to reduce hospitalization and amputation in adults with diabetes, according to a first of its kind study conducted by Thomson Reuters. The study was presented by Vickie R. Driver, MS, DPM, during the American Podiatric Medical Association's (APMA) 98th Annual Scientific Meeting in Seattle, July 15-18, 2010. The presentation highlighted the dramatic impact that even a single visit to a podiatrist can have on patients with diabetes.

The study, which was sponsored by APMA, examined records for more than 32,000 patients with diabetes, ages 18-64, and compared health and risk factors for those who had podiatry visits to those who did not. Researchers found that care by a podiatric physician (defined as at least one preventative, pre-ulcer visit) was associated with a nearly 29 percent lower risk of amputation and 24 percent lower risk of hospitalization. Diabetic foot complications are the leading cause of non-traumatic lower limb amputation in the U.S.

"The results of this study undeniably support visits to a podiatrist being critical to a diabetes patient's health and well being," said APMA member Dr. Driver. "No longer can care by a podiatrist be considered optional for those with diabetes, and the earlier a podiatrist is included in the diabetes management team, the better quality of life for the patient and greater health-care cost savings for all involved. This study clearly allows us to understand both the clinical and economic value of a podiatrist, in the team approach to saving diabetic patients' feet."

The study was conducted using Thomson Reuters' MarketScan Research Databases, which house fully integrated, de-identified health-care claims data extensively used by researchers to understand health economics and outcomes. Studies based on MarketScan data have been published in more than 130 peer-reviewed articles in the past five years.

Lead researcher Teresa Gibson, PhD, director of health outcomes research at Thomson Reuters said, "Using the MarketScan Databases, we statistically matched patients with diabetes and foot ulcers who had visited a podiatrist with like patients who had not. The analysis of the data indicates that patients who had seen a podiatrist in the year prior to the onset of a foot ulcer had significantly lower rates of any amputation and hospitalization than those who had not."

For additional information on the study, visit www.apma.org/diabetesstudy.