

Fact Sheet: Studies Prove Podiatrists Prevent Complications, Provide Savings

According to the CDC, over 29 million Americans live with diabetes. Diabetes is the leading cause of non-traumatic lower-limb amputation; however, amputations can be prevented. Two peer-reviewed published studies evaluated care by podiatrists for patients with diabetes and demonstrated that compared to other health-care professionals, podiatrists are best equipped to treat lower extremity complications from diabetes, prevent amputations, reduce hospitalizations, and provide savings to our health-care delivery systems.

Access to a Podiatrist Can Lead to Savings for US Health-Care Delivery Systems

According to a study conducted by Thomson Reuters Healthcare (accessible at: www.tinyurl.com/trstudy) that compared outcomes of care for patients with diabetes treated by podiatrists versus care provided by other health-care professionals and physicians published in the *Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association*¹:

- Among patients with commercial insurance, a savings of \$19,686 per patient with diabetes can be realized over a three-year period if there is at least one visit to a podiatrist in the year preceding a diabetic ulceration. Diabetic ulcerations are the primary factor leading to lower extremity amputations. Among patients with commercial insurance, each \$1 invested in care by a podiatrist results in \$27 to \$51 of savings for the health-care delivery system.
- Among Medicare-eligible patients, a savings of \$4,271 per patient with diabetes can be realized over a three-year period if there is at least one

visit to a podiatrist in the year preceding ulceration. Among Medicare eligible patients, each \$1 invested in care by a podiatrist results in \$9 to \$13 of savings.

- Conservatively projected, these per-patient numbers support an estimated \$10.5 billion in savings over three years if every at-risk patient with diabetes sees a podiatrist at least one time in the year preceding the onset of an ulceration.

Care by a Podiatrist Can Reduce the Risks and Prevent Complications from Diabetes

According to an independent study conducted by Duke University published in *Health Services Research*²:

- Medicare-eligible patients with diabetes were less likely to experience a lower extremity amputation if a podiatrist was a member of the patient-care team.
- Patients with severe lower extremity complications who only saw a podiatrist experienced a lower risk of amputation compared with patients who did not see a podiatrist.
- A multidisciplinary team approach that includes podiatrists most effectively prevents complications from diabetes and reduces the risk of amputations.

¹ Ginger Carls et al., "The Economic Value of Specialized Lower-Extremity Medical Care by Podiatric Physicians in the Treatment of Diabetic Foot Ulcers," *Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association* 101 (2011): 93-115, accessible at: www.tinyurl.com/trstudy.

² Sloan, F. A., Feinglos, M. N. and Grossman, D. S. , RESEARCH ARTICLE: Receipt of Care and Reduction of Lower Extremity Amputations in a Nationally Representative Sample of U.S. Elderly. *Health Services Research*, no. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6773.2010.01157.x