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Removable custom-made lightweight fibreglass boot (RFB) is effective in healing foot ulcers

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Background: Total contact cast is the standard treatment to off-load diabetic foot ulcer (DFU), however many patients refuse it due to inconvenience caused by this. Other off loading devices are not effective or are costly. We developed a removable custom-made lightweight fibreglass boot (RFB) by taking the cast of the foot and toughening the weight bearing area. The semi rigid top part is split open in the middle and fastened with two removable velcro straps. RFB fits comfortably, off-load the ulcer and patients are freely mobile. This can be removed easily at night to sleep.

Aims of Study: To study if RFB is effective in healing foot ulcers.

Subjects & Methods: This was a retrospective study by anonymous postal questionnaire. We received 8 (57%) replies out of 14 sent.

Results: 62.5% of these patients had received other pressure off loading devices including plaster cast and aircast walker before RFB. Majority (83%) found RFB easy and convenient to use and would recommend it to a friend. RFB healed 75% of the ulcers by mean of 7.3 weeks. On average patients wore it for 12 hours a day and removed it at night. 50% suffered minor abrasions, which were self-limiting and 37.5% needed modification of RFB at some stage.

Discussion: We found RFB was safe, cheap and effective in healing DFU. Further studies are needed to compare RFB with other off loading methods.