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Charcot foot in Belgium: an indication of its importance in specialised diabetic foot clinics

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Purpose: To study the importance of Charcot feet within a diabetic foot database in Belgium. Methods: Data from 20 multidisciplinary foot clinics (FC) were gathered. Each FC provided data for the first 52 patients that were treated for a new foot problem (Charcot and/or wound of Wagner  $\geq 2$ ) at the FC between 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2004 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005. Data regarding status at intake, treatment and status until healing or 12 months after intake were collected. Results: 38% of the complete population (patients with ulcer(s) and/or Charcot; n = 1043) was female, 62% was male with an average age of 69y  $\pm$  12.3. Most patients had ulcer(s) (93.3%), 3.5% (n = 38) had a Charcot and 3.2% (n = 41) had both. Of all Charcot feet (n = 79) 60% was active at intake (n = 46 of which 12 with both Charcot and an ulcer). Thus, in the studied population with specific foot problems  $\pm$  4% of patients were treated for active Charcot. Of these active Charcots  $\pm$  80% (n = 38) was immobilized by a short leg cast or a removable boot while  $\pm$ 20% was treated differently (e.g. wheelchair, bed rest). One year after intake, 40 Charcots (87%) did not show signs of acute inflammation anymore. Discussion: The present study shows that in a population of 1043 patients with severe foot problems  $\pm$  4% of patients suffered from an active Charcot. While it is known that Charcot feet are very rare, little is known about its prevalence. Although the present study is not designed to deduct the prevalence of active Charcot in Belgium the results can be used to give an indication of the proportion of Charcot feet treated in Belgian specialised foot clinics. However, it should be emphasized that participating FC only provided data from the first 52 patients treated over a year time. Although for some FCs this is the majority of patients treated this is not the case for the bigger FC. Data analyses from the latest data collection (2008) are ongoing and will be used to support the present findings.