

Patient and health care provider related delay in the treatment of diabetic foot ulcers

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Background and aims: A diabetic foot ulcer is a potentially life threatening complication and costly for both the patient and the health care system. A prompt and effective treatment is necessary to reduce the risk of deep infections and amputations. Time from “ulcer to treatment” is an important determinant of treatment outcome. The aim of this study was to identify treatment delay, and reasons for delay, in a multidisciplinary outpatient setting. **Materials and methods:** 118 patients with 148 new contacts and 193 foot ulcers were identified during 9. Sep. 2013 until 9 March 2014. Eighty-nine (75%) patients were men, average age was 66 years (41-90 years), 59% had type 2 diabetes and the mean duration was 28 years (1-57 years), HbA1c was average 67 mmol/mol (31-125 mmol/mol). We registered time between foot ulcer and contact, and contact and appointment (internal standard being satisfactory <24 hours, insufficient 1-7 days, and unsatisfactory >one week), respectively, and other relevant co-vitiated. **Results:** Median time between foot ulcer and contact was 8 days (range 1-180 days), while median time between contact and appointment and active treatment of the ulcer was only 1 day (range 1-180 days) ; <24 hours in 126 contacts (85%), 1-7 days 15 contacts (10%) and > 1 week 7 contact (5%). The most common ulcer type was neuropathic (49 %), and the most common placement was toe (65%). 72% of the patients had a previous foot ulcer. The most common reasons for the current ulcer were trauma (29%) and footwear (16%), but in 23% of the cases there was no known causative factor. Mean duration to healing was 5 weeks (1-18 weeks) (n=96). **Conclusion:** Diabetic foot ulcers often appear with no known causative factor. Even when out-patient clinic availability is kept at a very high level, contact delay still seems a significant barrier to effective ulcer healing. Further investigation as to the underlying reasons and remedies for contact delay is warranted.