DIABETES FOOT CARE
CLINICAL PATHWAY
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

PROJECT BULLETIN - FALL 2016

There is growing prevalence of diabetes and an increasing number of lower limb amputations being performed across Alberta.

The majority of these amputations are a result of diabetes foot ulcers which are up to 85% preventable.

To make a difference the DON SCN has developed a clinical care pathway with the goal to improve early detection and treatment of diabetes foot problems, thereby reducing the need for amputations and deterioration of health status, which is associated with decreased quality of life and increased healthcare costs.

GOAL OF THE DIABETES FOOT CARE CLINICAL PATHWAY

To standardize and improve diabetes foot screening, early detection and treatment of foot problems to reduce amputations.

KEY DELIVERABLES

- Screening/assessment/treatment standards and patient referral/transition processes
- Tools/educational resources for patients & providers
- Community based High Risk Foot Teams
- Pilot testing of pathway and High Risk Foot Teams
- Formal Evaluation
- Develop/implement scale and spread strategy
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Diabetes Foot Care Clinical Pathway Project was launched in Spring 2014.

Since then 100’s of clinicians, subject matter experts and patients from across all sectors of care - Primary Care, Home Care, Acute Care, Long Term Care, Podiatric Surgeons, Orthopedic Surgeons, Rehabilitation Medicine, Wound Care Specialty Clinicians and Alberta Health (AADL) - have been consulted, interviewed and recruited to the initiative, which seeks to transform how diabetic foot ulcers are prevented, managed and treated across Alberta.

In 2014, a provincial survey was developed and delivered to providers from all sectors of care that provide service for diabetes foot and wound care. The results of this environmental scan highlighted:
- Foot assessments are not performed consistently and those performing the assessments could benefit from more training (i.e. how to test for sensation using a monofilament).
- When a foot problem is identified providers are unsure of where to send the patient for care.
- Patients have to travel long distances for specialty foot and wound care.

PROVIDER AND PATIENT FEEDBACK
OBTAINED THROUGH A PROVINCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN WITH 115 RESPONSES

"I have had diabetes for 20 years and no one has ever looked at my feet"
- Patient

"We have 400 diabetes patients in our clinic and there is no where to send them if they need foot care services"
- South Zone PCN Nurse

"I do perform diabetes foot assessments but I don’t feel I know how to do the sensation testing and I am not sure I can identify when a patient is at risk of an ulcer"
- Central Zone Primary Care Nurse

The lifetime risk of a foot ulcer in persons with diabetes is 15-25%

Diabetes foot ulcers account for over 60% of all lower limb amputations

Up to 85% of these amputations can be prevented through screening, early implementation of treatment and better self care practices

The 5-year mortality rate after new-onset diabetic ulceration have been reported between 43% and 55%, and are as high as 74% for patients who had a lower limb amputation

THESE ARE REASONS WHY ALBERTA NEEDS A PROVINCIAL FOOT CARE PATHWAY
CLINICAL PATHWAY CONTENT

Clinical Pathway resources for **Health Care Providers** include:

**Diabetes Foot Risk Assessment Form** - a one page form to assist providers in identifying level of risk.

**Diabetes Foot Risk Assessment Triage Referral Form** - a one page form to assist providers in navigating the patient to the right service and within a specified time frame depending on the level of risk identified.

**Diabetes Foot Assessment and Risk Identification: A Health Provider’s Guide** - a booklet to guide the provider through the Diabetes Foot Risk Assessment Form.

**Diabetes Foot Referral Algorithm** - a document that provides a snap shot and high level overview of the referral and follow up standards for diabetes foot care.

**Why a Proper Foot Assessment is Important Video-scribe** - a short video illustrating why it is essential for people with diabetes to have a foot assessment each year by a health care provider as part of their overall diabetes management.  You can view the video here: [https://youtu.be/olRsdbfBs_I](https://youtu.be/olRsdbfBs_I)

For **Patients**, the pathway has incorporated **Foot Care for People with Diabetes: Low, Moderate and High Risk Care Recommendations** - a patient resource that describes the different risk levels and how to take care of their feet and prevent ulcer progressions.

The Diabetes Foot Care Pathway project team has been busy meeting with pilot site primary care clinicians who have been using the pathway tools to gather feedback on their content and ease of use. The next steps will be to improve the tools and meet with patients to get advice on improving the patient handout. We anticipate the tools will be ready for the next phase of sites to implement the pathway and develop High Risk Foot Teams in fall of 2016.
HIGH RISK FOOT TEAMS

An essential component of the pathway project is the establishment of High Risk Foot Teams, community based clinicians who care for patients at moderate risk (at risk of an ulcer) and high risk (ulcer present), provide education for self-management, including the importance of proper foot care and proper foot wear, and coordinate care, if necessary, with other specialists.

Teams in Westview, Brooks and Slave Lake are collaborating with the DON SCN to measure the accessibility of patient to high risk foot teams, as well as appropriateness, efficiency, acceptability and effectiveness of the clinical pathway.

Existing High Risk Foot Teams in Westview and Brooks have expanded their current wound care services to include the assessment and treatment of patients who do not have an ulcer but are at risk of developing an ulcer. Slave Lake has an existing foot care clinic and will expand its services to treat patients with ulcers. High Risk Foot Teams have prescribers for Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) benefits. Supporting resources to standardize approach for High Risk Foot Teams have also been developed.

LATEST PROJECT UPDATES

NEW GUIDELINES AVAILABLE


Click here for the guidelines or visit http://www.jvascsurg.org/article/S0741-5214(15)02025-X/pdf

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF WOUND CARE (CAW) ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

This past April, the CAW released a document titled “Working for Change: The CAW’s Advocacy Campaign for the Prevention of Diabetic Foot Complications” which highlights suggested changes to health care policy and outlines cost-effective methods for improving foot care for people with diabetes and, ultimately, reducing the number of preventable amputations.

To read more about the campaign and action for change please click here.

NEW IMPLEMENTATION SITES FOR THE DIABETES FOOT CARE PATHWAY

The Diabetes Foot Care Pathway project team is pleased to be partners with three new pathway implementation sites across Alberta.

- Chinook Region
- Kalyna Country PCN
- Mosaic PCN

STAY TUNED! DIABETES FOOT CARE CLINICAL PATHWAY SPRING SYMPOSIUM

Planning is under way for a symposium in spring 2017 to create awareness of the Diabetes Foot Care Clinical Pathway and provide an educational opportunity to primary care providers on how to use the pathway tools, how to do diabetes foot assessments and management recommendations.

Further updates about the symposium will be made as they are available.

For more information about the Diabetes Foot Care Clinical Pathway, please contact us at:

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