

Media release

25 August 2020

For immediate release

Community podiatrists learning new skills from Waitematā DHB specialists

Waitematā DHB is teaming up with community-based podiatrists to provide specialised care for people with diabetes-related foot problems.

People with diabetes can develop foot ulcers which, in worst cases, can lead to amputation of the foot or lower leg.

A study by public health physician Dr Sarah Gray and two consultant podiatrists, Michele Garrett and Alexandra Nobel-Beasley, found the community podiatry workforce had limited experience working with diabetic patients who were at high risk of foot ulcerations.

Those working in the community often have limited exposure to these patients and also have time constraints that can limit their ability to update their skills in performing the comprehensive examinations undertaken in the public sector podiatry service.

To help combat this, a number of part-time community podiatrists are currently working alongside specialist podiatrists at North Shore and Waitakere hospitals. They have gained knowledge in assessing and caring for people with complex foot conditions while continuing to work in their community practices.

Waitematā DHB General Manager for Speciality Medicine and Health of Older People Brian Millen says: “Diabetes can cause foot disease which can lead to extreme pain, ulcers, amputations and disability. When treated effectively, these complications can be significantly reduced or avoided.”

By working alongside Waitematā DHB’s specialist podiatrists, the community team is able to update and upskill in performing comprehensive foot risk assessments and in the management of foot ulcerations and related conditions.

The partnership has been in place for nearly two years and funding has just been secured to continue it for another year.

A significant number of new foot ulcers were identified during the 1486 appointments held over the past 12 months. Rapid referral to the specialist podiatry team has reduced the number of potential toe and foot amputations if wounds had not been identified and treated early.

“The skills these podiatrists have acquired have flowed back into their community practices, resulting in increased awareness of risk, early detection of issues and increased referrals through to secondary care clinics,” says Mr Millen.

ENDS

For further information, contact: Waitematā DHB Media Line, ph. 4871276



Photo caption: Waitemata DHB podiatrists Tokhy Hoang (left) and Willis Hong are training community podiatrists in caring for people with diabetes-related foot problems.