

Constantiaberg Hospital Diabetic Education Forum

The importance of a diabetic being a part of a *Diabetic team of professionals* cannot be stressed enough.

As the diabetic foot can have many complications, it is vital that patients have proper care to keep their feet in healthy working order.

A Diabetic networking team draws on the expertise of a number of specialists with the knowledge and skills to manage the diabetic, the diabetic foot and the resultant complications that diabetics can suffer from.

The purpose of a Podiatrist being a part of the diabetic networking team is to provide comprehensive foot care for all diabetics under one umbrella. With this approach, the patient and his or her condition can be more efficiently managed and communicated amongst the team. This reduces the risk of amputations and prevents common foot disorders.

The Team

This is mentioned in no particular order of importance as each and every member plays an equally vital role:

1. A *vascular surgeon* with an interest in diabetics and foot salvage. Without good, healthy blood supply you are at high risk of losing your limbs.
2. A *diabetic educator* who is there to educate the patient about diabetes and assist him or her in maintaining good blood glucose monitoring, as well as provide support.
3. The *podiatrist* - responsible for foot assessments that include a comprehensive diabetic foot assessment. This includes the treatment of all skin and nail conditions (calluses, corns, etc) and assessment of the patient's footwear as well as their biomechanics.

This allows the podiatrist to prescribe orthotics to correct the biomechanics. In turn this helps to reduce high pressure areas and redistribute the weight more evenly, thereby reducing the risk of skin breakdown, ulceration and resultant amputation.

4. An *advanced wound care practitioner* who has a special interest in the diabetic foot. This is essential because, if a diabetic foot wound or ulcer is treated promptly, the risk of amputation is reduced considerably.

I am very privileged to have Anne Berzen, an advanced wound care practitioner with an interest in Diabetes in my practice. It is the only Podiatry practice in Cape Town that has a podiatrist and a wound care practitioner in the same consulting rooms.

5. A *dietician*. Diabetic patients must be referred to a dietician or they will not be able to make the necessary life style changes required to have good blood glucose control.

6. An *endocrinologist* - a specialist physician who is responsible for monitoring the hormonal functions in the body. Some endocrinologists have a special interest in diabetes. Every diagnosed diabetic should see an endocrinologist.