

Limb Preservation Alliance: Behind A New Global Initiative In Limb Preservation Education, Advocacy and Awareness

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Abstract: The Limb Preservation Alliance (LPA) is a new international collaboration between four founding organizations: Wounds Canada, the American Limb Preservation Society, the Canadian Podiatric Medicine Association and D-Foot International. The LPA is dedicated to advancing limb preservation education, advocacy and awareness. In this article, principals from the founding organizations answer questions on the new organization, its objects and the way forward.

Key words: *Limb Preservation Alliance, limb preservation, education, awareness, advocacy, international cooperation.*

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In November of 2023, Wounds Canada (WC), The American Limb Preservation Society (ALPS), the Canadian Podiatric Medical Association (CPMA) and D-Foot International (D-Foot Intl.) announced an innovative global collaboration to bring change to the fight for limb preservation. The new Limb Preservation Alliance (LPA) unites regional, national and international organizations to fight against unnecessary limb amputations. This alliance combines efforts in education, advocacy and awareness.

Every 20 seconds, somewhere around the world, someone loses their leg due to the complications of diabetes.¹ Moving away from a time when amputation stood as the sole recourse, today's approach emphasizes preserving resections and undertaking intricate reconstructions, marking a significant leap forward in treating diabetic foot ulcers. In recent decades, the realm of diabetic foot ulcers and their complications has witnessed remarkable progress. Amputation is no longer the exclusive solution for managing damaged

bone and soft tissue in extremities. Function-preserving alternatives for such lesions have become standard practice, offering effective local control without jeopardizing overall disease survival. This shift has not only documented improvements in the quality of life for patients, but has also rendered amputation no longer the primary approach.

Limb Preservation Journal staff asked the founding members of the LPA to comment on the objectives and role of the LPA and how it will work together on future projects and campaigns to raise awareness for limb preservation best practices.

1. How did the idea of the Limb Preservation Alliance (LPA) come about?

Zulfiqarali G Abbas: The collaboration stems from the shared common goal between the organizations in addressing the escalating challenges in limb preservation on a global scale. It is becoming more evident that a coordinated, cooperative effort



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is necessary due to the surging prevalence of diabetic foot complication and the pressing need for comprehensive limb preservation measures.

Mariam Botros: From both a global and Canadian standpoint, the inception of the Limb Preservation Alliance was prompted by a recognition of the urgent need for action in addressing the escalating issue of traumatic amputations. Wounds Canada has long been committed to empowering health-care providers to enhance wound care practices, aiming to provide optimal care for individuals with wounds or those at risk of developing them with the ultimate goal of improving quality of life and preventing limb loss.

However, a sobering 2023 study revealed a significant rise in the number of global limb amputations indicating that, “the incidence and prevalence number of global traumatic amputation increased from 11.37 million and 370.25 million in 1990, to 13.23 million and 552.45 million in 2019.”² This research underscored the severity of the situation we find ourselves in today.

The numbers were staggering, indicating a pressing need for intervention. Particularly concerning was the revelation that up to 85% of lower limb amputations attributed to diabetes could be prevented. According to Diabetes Canada, approximately 5,000 diabetes-related amputations

are performed annually, with a potential annual growth rate of 4%, resulting in substantial health-care costs. In fact, the average cost to treat a lower limb amputation in Canada is approximately \$120,000.00.³

Faced with these alarming statistics, it became evident that concerted efforts were imperative. Recognizing the power of raising awareness as a catalyst for change, we sought collaboration with like-minded organizations sharing our mission. This collaborative effort gave rise to the Limb Preservation Alliance, an initiative aimed at driving progress and effecting positive change in the field of limb preservation.

Howard Green: The Canadian Podiatric Medical Association has been working closely with Wounds Canada on limb preservation advocacy for a number of years. This is an area that is important for podiatrists as we work to save patients from unnecessary amputations. Research in that area is typically presented at the [Canadian] Limb Preservation Symposium and/or published in the *Limb Preservation Journal*. The goal is to work with others globally to move research and policy frameworks forward.

Georgia Krehbiel: It is believed that somewhere around the world, someone loses their leg due to

complications related to diabetes or peripheral artery disease (PAD) every 20 seconds.¹ The LPA was established to bring a multinational and multidisciplinary effort to the forefront of this global health crisis. By raising awareness and promoting early collaborative and multidisciplinary intervention, we aim to reduce the incidence of unnecessary amputations and improve patient outcomes and overall limb salvage rates on a global scale.

2. What do you hope this alliance will achieve?

Zulfiqarali G Abbas: The pathway to this alliance is characterized by the in-depth discussions, shared insights and an absolute recognition that our combined abilities will have an impactful revolutionary effect. An alliance with mutual goals, a shared set of ideologies and determined efforts will produce a positive change in the realm of limb preservation.

Mariam Botros: Through a comprehensive approach encompassing education, research, advocacy and awareness, our Alliance is committed to driving a significant reduction in preventable amputations, both in Canada and the US, as well as on a global scale. By empowering health-care professionals and caregivers with knowledge of effective wound care practices, we aim to equip individuals with the tools needed to preserve their limbs and mitigate the risk of amputation.

Furthermore, our advocacy efforts focus on influencing policy changes to foster greater awareness and education on this crucial issue. Concurrently, we are dedicated to supporting international research initiatives aimed at advancing the understanding and treatment of wounds to ultimately prevent unnecessary amputations. This holistic approach is especially vital in underserved regions where access to health care is limited, emphasizing the importance of self-care and community support in preventing amputation.

Howard Green: We hope the LPA will help raise awareness on this issue and translate into fewer amputations for patients. Locally, in Canada, our work in the LPA will hopefully aid advocacy

efforts with government and policy makers to ensure that proper funding and systems are in place.

Georgia Krehbiel: I am hopeful the Alliance will advance the field of limb preservation by fostering collaboration, innovation and education among global health-care professionals in the field and will bring a unified, organized front to this health issue. In order to accomplish this, we must facilitate joint research initiatives, establish standardized protocols, enhance the understanding and treatment of limb-threatening conditions and drive policy change.

Addressing the racial and economic global health inequities in limb preservation care is also at the forefront of our mission. By driving greater awareness of these disparities and advocating for policies and measures to reduce them, the Alliance can help ensure that individuals, regardless of race, socioeconomic status or geography, have access to timely and quality limb-saving care. The Alliance's end goal and greatest achievement would be to reduce the incidence of preventable amputations and improve the quality of life for individuals dealing with limb-related health issues. While these tasks may be daunting, I believe the collective commitment, dedication and expertise of our Alliance provides hope for meaningful progress toward reducing disparities and advancing health equity in limb preservation care.

3. What has been its impact thus far?

Zulfiqarali G Abbas: Our work with LPA reflects a strong commitment to our core mission of: "ending avoidable lower-limb amputations due to diabetes worldwide". We aim to synergize our efforts to reduce the burden of limb related complications, globally. This powerful alliance positions the organization at the forefront of limb preservation innovation, advocacy and research. We envision a future where the incidence of limb complication is significantly minimized with subsequent optimized patient outcomes and an improved quality of life.

As we begin this new chapter together, the strength of our Alliance lies not just in the organizational collaboration, but unity of purpose and collective dedication of every member involved. I

am confident that this collaboration is a momentous turning point in our history and together we will script a narrative of success, achievements and dedication to limb preservation.

Mariam Botros: Our awareness campaigns conducted throughout 2023 and into early 2024 have garnered favourable reception. Collaborating closely with fellow Alliance members has amplified our reach, enabling us to disseminate our message to a broader audience. Additionally, our joint global research initiatives on policy priority setting have begun laying the groundwork for comprehensive strategies to address this pressing issue on an international scale. While we are still in the early phases, these initial outcomes signify a solid foundation for future progress.

Howard Green: We have combined efforts with our partners to reach out to the public and health-care professionals using social media. Patient education is a key issue.

Georgia Krehbiel: The impact of the LPA has been promising. So far through the Alliance, we've seen increased awareness and collaboration among a growing network of professionals dedicated to limb preservation. We have already partnered on numerous awareness campaigns for both patients and providers. We have also partnered on educational webinars led by ALPS board members and experts in the field of the diabetic foot. We will soon embark on our first collaborative research initiative, engaging global leaders and experts in the diabetic foot and gaining insights on priority and implementation timelines of the IWGDF recommendations. We are hopeful this will help policy makers better understand the complexities of the diabetic foot and identify priorities that will globally improve patient outcomes and ultimately help end preventable amputations.

4. What are your plans for the future of this alliance?

Zulfiqarali G Abbas: Our vision for the future of this alliance is revolutionary. Our goal is to become a global powerhouse in the world of limb preservation. This alliance fosters an array

of collaborative research opportunities, seminars, workshops, conferences, and harbours a strong knowledge sharing and networking platform. Our plans also involve initiating dialogue on innovation, disseminating education and sharing patient care paradigms. The ultimate goal is to create a network that not only responds effectively to the current challenges but also addresses the future trends in the realm of limb preservation.

The key to our success lies in the hands of the members. Their active participation is essential to achieving our group's goal. Their knowledge, clinical expertise and dedication are crucial in establishing cutting-edge approaches to disseminate education to the health-care professionals. As I say and will always continue to say, "education is our most powerful tool", particular in low to middle-income countries. By providing valuable education, health-care professionals will directly impact our patients, increase awareness and improve approaches to limb preservation.

Mariam Botros: As more and more organizations join our efforts, we hope to see a significant change in wound-related policies, advancements, research and technology. It goes without saying that we would like to see more funds allocated to limb preservation initiatives to continue to support the many wonderful organizations doing incredible work in the field. Ultimately, we hope to see a future where wounds are treated early and efficiently removing the need for all preventable limb amputations.

In addition, the ongoing research on policy priority setting forms a robust cornerstone for our future advocacy, awareness and training strategies for the years ahead. As we progress, with the addition of more organizations to our cause, we anticipate a substantial transformation in wound-related policies, research advancements and technological innovations. It is imperative to allocate increased funding towards initiatives focused on limb preservation, thereby bolstering the efforts of numerous organizations contributing remarkable work in this field. Ultimately, our vision is to cultivate a future where wounds are promptly and effectively treated, thus eliminating all preventable limb amputations.

Howard Green: We need to still reach out to government and policy makers. We also continue to target the general public and media.

Georgia Krehbiel: Looking ahead, I am hopeful that we can expand the reach and influence of the LPA to include other global partners who are making a difference in the field. This includes forging new partnerships, engaging in strategic collaborations with research institutions and industry and continuing to advocate for the integration of limb preservation practices into mainstream health-care, as well as underserved populations. I hope to establish the Alliance as a globally recognized authority in limb preservation, with the capacity to drive policy changes, influence medical education and contribute to advancements in research and technology.

5. How can health professionals working in limb preservation help the Alliance achieve its goals?

Zulfiqarali G Abbas: D-Foot International has always worked to improve diabetic foot care globally. However, our partnership with LPA amplifies our influence. By continuing our unique missions inside this alliance, we make sure that our combined efforts transcend beyond to create a powerful force for positive change. As we embark this new journey together, let us reflect on the profound potential we at D-Foot International and LPA possess.

Mariam Botros: Health professionals specializing in limb preservation play a pivotal role in advancing the goals of our Alliance. By joining as members of their respective associations, they become integral parts of the supporting network of organizations dedicated to advancing education, advocacy and awareness. Through their expertise and resources, they can actively contribute to our mission and amplify our collective efforts. The more informed and active professionals and public members we have onboard, the greater our potential to effect tangible change and progress in the field. Together, we can elevate the significance of proper care practices, reducing health-care costs preserving limbs and saving lives.

Howard Green: All health professionals (podiatrists, nurses, vascular surgeons, endocrinologists, etc.) need to help amplify the messages and advocate for best practices and funding of such initiatives. Health professionals can work to promote and implement international guidelines, and the main reason for this is that it's all about helping patients avoid unnecessary amputations.

Georgia Krehbiel: Health professionals in limb preservation play a crucial role in the success of the Alliance. Active participation or membership of one or more of the founding organizations will help health-care professionals keep apprised of what is happening with the Alliance and get involved. Participating in events such as conferences, workshops and collaborative projects is crucial for the Alliance to reach diverse populations across the globe and promote proactive approaches to limb preservation. Furthermore, spreading awareness about the importance of limb preservation and advocating for multidisciplinary approaches within professional circles and broader health-care communities will help the Alliance achieve its overarching goals. Ultimately, the commitment of health professionals will be instrumental in making a lasting and meaningful impact. ■

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Editor's note: Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

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Launched in 2019 as *Limb Preservation in Canada*, the journal is the cornerstone of a limb preservation community that, in addition to clinicians, educators and researchers, includes patients, advocates, administrators and policy makers. Recognizing that the challenges associated with limb preservation are global and impact health-care professionals around the world, and identifying the lack of a dedicated clinical publication, the *Limb Preservation Journal* has expanded its scope to also invite submissions from the international limb preservation community.

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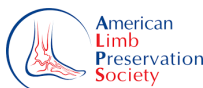
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