

# Workshop Aims to Reduce Amputation Rates in Northern Ontario

By Mariam Botros, Janet Kuhnke, Robyn Evans and Bo Fusek

**C**anadians living with diabetes mellitus, and its serious complications, are increasing in numbers.<sup>1,2</sup> This is evident in Northern Ontario, which has a much higher rate of lower extremity amputations than the provincial average. As part of the North East LHIN's overall strategy to reduce these increasing rates, Diabetic Foot Canada (DFC) was invited to deliver the one-day Prevention

and Management of Diabetic Foot Complications workshop onsite on March 28, 2014.

The workshop, hosted by Health Sciences North/Horizon Santé-Nord (HSN) in Greater Sudbury, was kicked off by Dr. Boji Varghese and Teresa Taillefer, who provided a key opening address to focus the day's activities and highlight the importance of this growing issue. Workshop content was delivered by Mariam Botros,

Janet Kuhnke, Robyn Evans and Bo Fusek.

The care of patients with foot complications and foot ulcerations requires an interprofessional collaborative approach within a complex communication network for collaborative and integrative care.<sup>3</sup> To align with this requirement the workshop was attended personal support workers, diabetes educators, practical and registered nurses, chiropodists, pedorthists, social workers, dietitians, family physicians, nurse practitioners, case managers and pharmacists. In all, over 120 health-care workers from across northeastern Ontario attended.

The workshop content was also consistent with guidelines from International Working Group on the Diabetic Foot (IWGDF), Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Canadian Diabetes Association, which recommend that health-

*Twenty-four personal support worker (PSW) students from First Nations coastal communities along the James Bay coast attended. "Last year we travelled to the James Bay coastal communities, meeting with residents and health-care leaders who told us about the shortage of PSWs in the area and also about the need for more foot care to address the high rates of diabetes. We're pleased to help 24 residents take on this important work and also receive this specialized footcare training."*

*— Martha Auchinleck, acting CEO, of the North East LHIN*

care systems need to incorporate the following recommendations into their system to support the reduction of foot complications:

- Implementation of inter-professional guidelines for education, screening and the treatment of all identified high-risk factors with criteria for quality improvement auditing
- Self-management and foot care education for patients with diabetes and their family/caregivers



- A system of regular screening (i.e., regular foot examinations) to detect people who are at risk, with frequency determined by risk
- Timely access to preventive foot care services at the point of care for people living with diabetes and a high-risk foot
- Establishment of interprofessional foot care teams/wound care teams for people with diabetes, and the creation of a timely referral pattern
- Timely and effective treatment for foot complications<sup>4,5,6</sup>

Diabetic foot ulcers and amputations are a costly problem to persons with diabetes, our communities and health-care system. A systematic approach of care is required to reduce the burden of this complication. Up to 85% of amputations can be reduced if sufficient attention is paid to the necessary measures. HSN provided an opportunity for policymakers and health-care professionals to work together to improve the care of persons with diabetes in their communities. 🤝

## References

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*"By offering this training and allowing health-care workers to go back into their communities, we can ensure more people with diabetes have proper foot examinations. That will allow their health-care workers to catch potential problems earlier and come up with foot care plans, so ulcers don't develop to the point where there are serious effects, such as amputation. It's really better care for patients."*  
— Joanne Guizzo, Clinical Manager of Ambulatory Care Clinics at HSN, which includes the Diabetes Care Service