

APERF funded research published in major medical journal

Karl Landorf, Anne-Maree Keenan and Rob Herbert recently had a research paper titled "Effectiveness of Foot Orthoses to Treat Plantar Fasciitis: A Randomized Trial" published in the prestigious medical journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*. One of the top eight medical journals in the world, *Archives of Internal Medicine* is published by the American Medical Association and is on par with the *British Medical Journal* from a quality/impact perspective. It is published twice per month with a print circulation to over 100,000 physicians in more than 75 countries around the world. Only 10% of articles submitted to this journal are accepted for publication.

As the title suggests, the article presents the findings from a randomised trial that the authors conducted, as well as a meta-analysis that pooled results from other similar trials. Dr Landorf said that "the results are very interesting for the podiatry profession because they indicate that appropriate orthoses are effective (beneficial) for the short-term management of plantar fasciitis. However, on average they have no beneficial long-term effect when compared to a sham device. This demonstrates that plantar fasciitis is likely to be self-limiting, therefore foot orthoses have a limited role in its long-term management, because the condition improves on its own with time."

Importantly, the research also clearly demonstrated that the effectiveness of the prefabricated orthosis used (a Formthotic) was no different to the customised orthosis used (a modified Root device balanced to the neutral calcaneal stance position). The take home message of these findings is, in the first instance, if orthoses are required, practitioners should prescribe cheaper prefabricated orthoses for the management of plantar fasciitis.

This Australian Podiatric Research Foundation (APERF) funded research is the culmination of seven years of study, including four other related-articles that have also been published - all of which underpinned this trial. The article by Karl and colleagues has generated a lot of interest with good debate on the website 'Podiatry Arena' [<http://www.podiatry-arena.com/>]. In addition, press releases about the article have been generated by Reuters, El Mundo newspaper (Spain), CIAOMed.org, and Medscape where it has been used as a continuing education exercise for medical practitioners.

"This article highlights that podiatry researchers from Australia and New Zealand are producing research of very high quality and this is being recognised by publication in high impact journals" Australasian Podiatry Council President, Matthew Slattery said. There have been a number of excellent publications in the past year where the primary author(s) have been podiatrists from Australasia including:

- Hylton Menz and Shannon Munteanu in the *Journal of Rheumatology*;
- Rajna Ogrin in the *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*;
- Angela Evans in the *Journal of Paediatrics*;
- Scott Wearing and Steve Urry in the *Journal of Sports Medicine*; and
- Josh Burns in the *Journal of Clinical Biomechanics*.

These are all significant publications because of the quality of the journals, where the review process is highly rigorous. As such, it emphasises that podiatric research, via the assistance provided by funding bodies such as APERF, is rapidly maturing and having an impact in the international arena – not just in podiatry but in the broader medical community. •

Those interested in obtaining a copy of the journal article can email Karl on: k.landorf@latrobe.edu.au.

The Australian Rural and Remote Health Professional Scholarship Scheme is now open for application

Qualified, practising rural and remote allied health professionals are able to apply for scholarship funding to support them to undertake a continuing professional education activity such as:

- attendance at a conference (remember the National Rural Health Conference is in March 2007; or discipline specific conferences occurring in 2007);
- short courses;
- individual clinical placements (do you want to upgrade skills in a particular area by visiting a metropolitan specialist clinic in that area and undertaking a placement); and
- formal postgraduate qualifications.

The application package including application form and scholarship guidelines can be downloaded from the SARRAH website - <http://www.sarra.org.au/Scholarship/PostGraduate.asp>

Applicants are encouraged to apply online as this greatly assists the SARRAH staff to process the application form information.

Closing date for applications is the 15th September 2006.

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