

Research to cut amputations wins peer review

An Australian Podiatry Education and Research Foundation (APERF) grant recipient is to have the findings of her research published in a prestigious international peer reviewed journal.

The Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association will publish the findings by podiatrist Vanessa Nube of her investigations into biomechanical risk factors that can lead to ulceration of the hallux in people with diabetes.

Her study, funded by APERF in 2001, could play a role in helping podiatrists prevent and treat foot ulcers which are leading to high numbers of amputations among people with diabetes in Australia, adding to the nation's sickness and health cost burden.

Considered Australia's fastest growing chronic disease, affecting almost one in four Australians, diabetes is also resulting in 3000 amputations annually, most of which are preventable.¹

Podiatrists are at the frontline of efforts to reduce this burden, with Diabetes Australia recommending that all people with diabetes see a podiatrist at least once

a year, who can then check for sensory loss, peripheral vascular disease and other predispositions, such as those identified by Vanessa's research, and provide appropriate treatment.

Vanessa assessed patients with neuropathic foot ulcers to determine which biomechanical factors were associated with ulcers occurring on the hallux – the most common site for ulceration in diabetes.

During the study, a range of standard biomechanical tests were applied. Patients were also rated on a foot posture index, developed by fellow APERF recipient Anthony Redmond. Footprints were recorded to assess the angle of gait.

In the study, a larger percentage of patients with previous hallux ulcers were unable to perform the resupination test, indicating muscle weakness. The other key findings were that feet with hallux ulcers had less first metatarsophalangeal dorsiflexion and were more pronated than feet with ulcers elsewhere.

Vanessa's study, together with an investigation into the use of felt deflective

padding for neuropathic ulcers on the hallux and forefoot (published earlier this year in another international journal, *The Foot*), formed the basis of her Masters thesis. •

Reference:

1. Diabetes Australia. Diabetes Facts [online]. 2002. [cited 2002 June 6]; [2 screens]. Available from: http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/_lib/doc_pdf/resources/FactSheets/Diabetes_FS.pdf

The Australian Podiatry Education and Research Foundation (APERF) was established in 1990 to encourage and support research into the causes, prevention and treatment of foot problems. Each year APERF awards grants to research projects of merit, after a rigorous selection process. To make a donation or find out more about grant criteria, please contact the APERF trustees on 03 9416 3111 or visit www.apodc.com.au/apodc/aperf.htm.

Foundation turns to ebay to raise funds

A beautiful print of a child's feet is next to be auctioned online to raise funds for Australia's key podiatric research promoter.

Online bidding for the print will open on ebay at noon on July 7 following a successful inaugural online auction last month which raised \$123.01 for the Australian Podiatry Education and Research Foundation (APERF).

Launched on the ebay site on May 12, two polo shirts donated by podiatrists who worked at the athletes' village polyclinic during the Commonwealth Games, prompted generous bidding.

The 21 volunteer workers were all members of the Australasian Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine.

One of the shirts was available only to those who lived and worked at the village during the Games. The other was a replica of those worn by the Australian team. Both were limited editions.

Over 10 days, 268 visitors clicked online to watch and take part in the bidding. Mark Ireland, a podiatrist from Western Australia, said he was delighted to have secured one of the items. "As for why I participated, well I believe our profession will only grow in a positive direction by



quality research, however to do this we need to support the great work of APERF. We all apply this research in the clinic so we need to give something back as well, this is a small way we can all do this."

The auction was so successful that the Australasian Podiatry Council (APoDC) which administers APERF is now seeking donations of other valuable goods to auction online to raise money.

"It's a great way to promote the foundation and its work," says APERF fundraising coordinator and Canberra podiatrist Paul Fleet. "This is one of the many ways we hope to raise awareness of the foundation, so continuing excellence in professional podiatric research can be encouraged."

Established in 1990 to fund research into the causes, prevention and treatment

of foot problems, APERF relies on donations and to date has supported more than 25 key projects to help improve the foot health of all Australians.

This year, for example, it is funding a year-long study of how foot structure and function and shoe wearing habits influence falls in older adults living independently.

Donors to APERF to date have included podiatrists, medical suppliers and grateful patients but Mr Fleet encouraged all members of the community to consider donating and supporting APERF's online auctions.

"The foundation funds key research projects that address important foot health issues. Please think about the difference your contribution could make." •

Visit www.apodc.com.au/cpd/aperf.htm to find out how APERF's money is spent and how you can help.

Bidding for a child's feet print opens at noon on Friday, July 7 and closes on Monday July 17. Check it out at www.ebay.com.au under Buy/Art/Prints.

To donate goods for auction, contact APoDC on (03) 9416 3111.

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