

Smoking in Diabetes-Related Foot Disease: Bridging the Gap Between Guidelines and Clinical Practice



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Background/Aims:

Smoking significantly increases the risk of peripheral artery disease, impaired wound healing, and lower-limb amputation in people with diabetes, making it a key modifiable factor in diabetes-related foot disease. Smoking is also a major contributor to preventable amputations in this population. Current evidence-based recommendations emphasize smoking cessation as a priority in diabetes care; however, in routine practice and even in guidelines, this is often limited to general advice without practical instruction on how to intervene. We aimed to develop and implement simple, practice-oriented educational tools to support structured smoking cessation in diabetology and foot care.

Methods:

Within a project under the national Diabetes Society, two complementary educational leaflets were developed for patients and healthcare professionals. The professional leaflet includes a concise 3-step brief intervention model (ask–advise–refer), key clinical information, and treatment options, while the patient leaflet focuses on motivation and available support.

Results:

The materials enable integration of brief smoking cessation interventions (≤10 minutes) into routine clinical care. They emphasize the role of smoking in vascular complications relevant to diabetes-related foot disease and provide clear guidance for structured intervention and referral. A key component is the combination of brief intervention with accessible contacts to specialized cessation services and quitlines, known to improve cessation success. The materials were distributed in printed form to diabetology/foot care centres and outpatient clinics and are freely available online via the national Diabetes Society website. Printed distribution supports direct use during patient encounters, while online availability facilitates broader dissemination among healthcare professionals and patients.

Conclusions:

Smoking cessation remains an under-addressed component of diabetes-related foot disease prevention despite strong evidence of harm. Practical tools translating general recommendations into actionable steps may improve implementation in routine care. Continued efforts are needed to increase awareness and actively support smoking cessation among both patients and healthcare professionals.

Educational leaflet for patients:



„If something ´s not impossible,
there must be a way of doing it.“



Sir Nicholas Winton



Educational leaflet for healthcare professionals:



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Source of pictures: www.google.com