



PREVALENCE OF RISK FACTORS FOR “DIABETIC FOOT” ULCERS.

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Introduction: Foot ulcers and amputation of the lower limb are the main consequences of “diabetic foot” complications. About 85% of amputations start out with an ulcer and lead to considerable growth in the mortality and morbidity of this population.

Materials and methods: An observational study with a descriptive analysis of the risk factors for foot ulcers, based on consultation of clinical records of patients who are resorting to the APDP (Diabetic Protection Association of Portugal) for the first time. This was carried out between January and December 2007. These patients were assessed by taking the following into account: neuropathy, peripheral vascular disease, foot deformation, and alterations in nails in a triage consultation.

Results: Sample of 1048 patients, of which 495 (47.2%) were female, and 553 (52.8%) were male, with an average age of 60.6 years old (median: 62 years old); 67 (6.4%) had type-1 diabetes, 925 (88.3%) had type-2 diabetes, and 56 (5.3%) had another type of diabetes. 16.3% of patients showed HBA1c equal to or lower than 6.5% with a mean disease period of 11 years (median: 7 years' disease period). Foot deformations were observed in 498 patients (47.5%), plantar hyperkeratosis in 522 (49.8%), and previous ulceration in 211 (20.1%) patients. An alteration to vibratory sensitivity was detected using a tuning fork in 101 (9.6%) patients, and neuropathy in 168 patients (16.0%) using Semmes-Weinstein monofilaments. On evaluating the risk grade in accordance with the International Consensus on the Diabetic Foot, 67.5% of patients were identified as Grade 0, 16% as Grade 1, 10.7% as Grade 2, and 5.8% as Grade 3.

Conclusion: The high prevalence of patients with risk grade 1, 2, and 3 in this study demonstrates the need to implement prevention strategies and foot evaluation programmes for diabetic patients in primary health-care centres.