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What happens with patients 'dropping out' from DF clinic supervision?

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Backgrounds: From Jan'04 to Jun'05 260 patients with diabetic foot ulcers/wounds were treated in local diabetic foot clinic (DFC). In 45% of them healing was observed, 4% referred to hospitals, 2% undergone amputations, 48% 'dropped out'. We studied follow-up data of 'dropped out' patients.

Methods: Medical records of 95 such patients were analyzed. Mean follow-up time was 17 (9-26) months, mean age - 66 yrs. 69 (73%) patients were available by telephone. We used a questionnaire to fix treatment results and causes of treatment in DFC discontinuation.

Results: 54% of questioned patients healed. Mean healing time was 150 (3-504) days. 10 (14.5%) patients undergone in-hospital treatment without amputation, 4 (6%) – outpatient treatment in other DFCs. In 12 (17%) amputations took place: 5 minor, 1 BK, 6 AK. After amputation 11 patients healed, 1 died. Overall mortality was 17.4% (12 pats). Causes of death were: diabetic foot complications in 2 patients, cardiovascular diseases in most of others. 1 patient stays unhealed. Relapses (new ulcers) took place in 15 (21%) patients. Causes of DFC treatment discontinuation: 28% were not satisfied by treatment results; to 17% other in/outpatient treatments were offered; for 33% DFC was too far from home; 22% were not mobile enough to come to DFC (patients who rarely come out from home); 17% had difficulties with appointment to new DFC visit.

Conclusions: Regular follow-up studies in 'dropping out' patients are necessary to discover weak sides of DFC activity. These data allow also to estimate approximate number of successful/unsuccessful results among all patients visited DFC. Discovered causes of supervision discontinuation make necessary easier DFC visit appointments and organization of new community-based DFCs.