



Preventing Diabetes-Related Amputations in America: A Solutions Summit Recap

On Thursday, July 13, 2023 the American Diabetes Association's Amputation Prevention Alliance (APA) gathered a group of experts to discuss preventing amputations in people living with diabetes. This half-day event brought together over 70 representatives from key patient and health care provider organizations to learn more about the health epidemic of peripheral artery disease (PAD), critical limb ischemia (CLI), diabetes-related foot ulcers, wound care and management, and more. From understanding the health inequities that have led to the devastating increasing trend of diabetes-related amputations to discussing potential policy solutions to educate people with diabetes and reach them sooner in their care journey, the event, **Preventing Diabetes-Related Amputations in America: A Solutions Summit**, provided a space for tough yet critical conversations about how to save limbs and lives.

The event commenced with a patient advocate who shared his long and hard-fought journey to save his leg. This patient advocate discussed the effects of a potential amputation on his life, family, and future. He talked at length about how insidious the condition is, discussing the constant care and maintenance required to keep his limbs and increase his quality of life. In conclusion, he noted, "I'm here because I want people to understand what is happening here...if my story can educate one person, help somebody, then it's worth it."

Next, participants dove deeper in the current clinical landscape, even hearing from Christopher Holliday, PhD, MPH, MA, FACHE from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a panel titled, **Laying the Foundation: Understanding the Current Landscape**. Joined by Cyaandi Dove, DPM from UT San Antonio Health Science Center, and Vincent Rowe, MD from UCLA Health, the panelists educated the attendees on the present state of diabetes-related amputations, important clinical considerations, and the factors contributing to the stark increase in these incidences. Dr. Holliday highlighted data to show the role of diabetes in the current amputation epidemic,

"Eighty percent of lower limb amputations result from complications from diabetes."

Other panelists spoke about the difference in access to and quality of care in various areas throughout the country, stating that your ability to access quality foot care and keep your limbs is like a "ZIP Code lottery." The panel further discussed what is missing from the current care paradigm in the U.S. The panel concluded by discussing how many people don't even know something is wrong until they arrive at the hospital with nonhealing wounds and gangrenous limbs. The panel openly questioned how the clinicians in his specialty of vascular surgery are working to understand how they can play a more active role in preventing amputations.

The next panel, **Clinician Expert Panel: Answering the Hard Questions**, brought together clinician voices representing a variety of specialties to discuss opportunities to prevent diabetes-related amputations across various health care providers, including how clinicians can reach people sooner in their care journey. Some highlights of the session included:

- Rodica Pop-Busui, MD, PhD began her presentation with a call to action of learning about what other specialties do and how they can have a seat at the table when

discussing someone's care journey, stating, "We need to understand the role of multi-disciplinary teams."

- From his experience as an interventional radiologist, Alok Bhatt, MD acknowledged that the onus is as much on the clinicians as it is on people with diabetes to understand how to stop the upwards trend of diabetes-related amputations, "Fixing this is not only a medical imperative, it's a moral imperative. Our patients deserve better."
- David Armstrong, DPM, MD, PhD closed the panel by leaving the audience with a way to get involved in the fight, "Amplify the words of our patients, policymakers...here's to making a difference."

We were honored to be joined by Congressman Donald Payne Jr., representing New Jersey's 10th Congressional District, for our keynote address, **An Overview of Amputation Prevention Legislation**. Rep. Payne Jr. joined us to share his personal journey with wound care and management, as well as discuss his motivations and goals for the Amputation Reduction and Compassion Act, an important piece of legislation introduced in June 2023. At the end of his remarks, the Congressman's call to action for the audience was more support on Capitol Hill. "The pressure point is Congress, and if we can get them on board, it is a bill that will save limbs and lives, but we need more support."

The next panel continued the policy discussion, highlighting the work being done at the federal and state levels to increase access to quality care for people most at risk for diabetes-related amputations. Lending their voices to this action-driven panel, **Policy Considerations: Addressing Access, Quality, and Collaboration**, speakers included Mollie Howerton, PhD, MPH from the CMS Innovation Center at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS); Aaron W. Aday, MD of the American Heart Association; and Adam Isaac, DPM representing the Foot and Ankle Specialists of the Mid-Atlantic. Speakers addressed topics, including CMS' strategic pillars regarding care for people living with diabetes; the PAD Collaborative, which "brings together organizations and experts committed to advancing the PAD National Action Plan with the goal to reduce serious complications and improve quality of life for people living with periphery artery disease;" and the potential impact of remote diabetic foot monitoring, including how, "Expanding access to remote patient monitoring can prevent unnecessary amputations and reduce health care costs."

The last panel of the day, **Innovation in Amputation Prevention**, focused on the emerging technologies, services, and methods that can play a role in preventing diabetes-related amputations. The group of presenters—Matthew Garoufalis, DPM, FASPS, FACFAOM, CWS from Advanced Oxygen Therapy, Inc.; Jon Bloom, MD from Podometrics; and Jennifer Jones-McMeans, PhD from Abbot—educated the audience on the opportunities that currently exist—or could soon exist—to help people with diabetes and their providers partner on amputation prevention strategies.

Wrapping up the day, Lisa Murdock, the ADA's chief advocacy officer, led the audience in an engaged conversation, recapping the day and discussing how we can continue to work together to address the awareness and education gaps about diabetes-related amputations and the conditions contributing to the epidemic.

The APA remains committed to our mission to reduce the number of unnecessary diabetes-related amputations that take place in the United States every year. This summit demonstrated the appetite and dedication of not only people with diabetes, but health care providers,

advocacy organizations, and policymakers, to keep working on this critical issue. Countless lives depend on us to get this right.