

2025

DFA CONFERENCE

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FORM

Submissions should focus on high-quality original research in diabetes-related foot disease with relevance for clinical practice, now or in the future.

06JUL25 ABSTRACTS CLOSE

23JUL25 OUTCOMES ADVISED

submit your form to

nationaloffice@diabetesfeetaustralia.org

TITLE Enhancing Multidisciplinary Care: Integrating Social Work Into a High-Risk Foot Service

AUTHORS Devereaux De Silva 1, Cindy Rahardjo 1, Anna Wellington-Boyd1 , Naomi Rowlings 2, Eleanor Thong 2.

EMAIL d.desilva@alfred.org.au

INSTITUTION Alfred Health

ABSTRACT (maximum 450 words. Please use the following or similar headings: Background/Methods/Results/Conclusions)

Affiliations: 1. Social Work Department, Alfred Health, 55 Commercial Rd, Melbourne, Victoria.

2. High Risk Foot Service, Alfred Health, 55 Commercial Rd, Melbourne, Victoria.

This presentation will highlight the value of incorporating social work into multidisciplinary teams to address the complex psychosocial needs of diabetes patients with high-risk foot conditions and the contribution to a positive team culture.

Background

Data from Australian and international studies have shown that diabetic foot disease (DFD) disproportionately affects those in lower socio-economic groups, with consequent poorer outcomes. The High-Risk Foot Service (HRFS) at Alfred Health in Melbourne was established in 2021 to provide timely and high-quality interventions for patients with complex foot wounds. This is a multidisciplinary team comprising podiatry, orthotics, endocrinology and vascular surgery expertise. An evaluation of the service from 2022 to 2023 showed high failure to attend rates, prompting the need to identify unmet needs and barriers for accessing care.

Aim

The aim of this project was to evaluate the impact of introducing a dedicated social work role within the HRFS at Alfred Health, with a focus on defining key psychosocial themes for referral, interventions delivered and patient experience of the service.

Method

A social worker, supported by an allied health assistant, undertook psychosocial and risk-related assessments and interventions within the HRFS from October 2023 to September 2024. Data was collected and analysed from social work entries within the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) across key domains including number of patients seen, identification of key themes for social work referral and social work intervention types, including time attributed. Results from a patient experience survey were collated to consider patient impact.

Results

Of the 101 patients seen by the social worker, 14 common referral themes were identified, including counselling, carer and family support, education, and complex discharge planning with the multidisciplinary team. Interventions also included advocacy, family violence risk assessments, and safety planning. Survey results showed high patient satisfaction: 86% of patients felt listened to and supported in their goals, and 83% felt treated with respect. 86% found the information from the social worker easy to understand, 76% felt their needs were met, and 77% felt treated with compassion—a core aspect of social work care. A key theme from the patient survey was the strong sense of social work support received.

Conclusions

There was a high demand for social work intervention in the HRFS and a significant level of psychosocial issues identified, including support for carers. A dedicated social worker within the HRFS may improve patient engagement and help bridge the gap between clinical care and the complex psychosocial realities faced by this patient cohort, their carers' and families.