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Life in Discovery

For Immediate Release:

SOLE PURPOSE

Global medical experts convene in Los Angeles to explore new treatments for diabetic feet

When our feet feel good, chances are so do we. That's why the foot is becoming a new focus for overall health and why the field of podiatric medicine is gaining both attention and respect.

More experts are also recognizing the feet as a battleground for diabetes - the underlying cause in about 80% of the 120,000 non-traumatic amputations performed yearly in the United States.

Medical professionals who consider the extremities a frontline in the fight against diabetes and disability will attend DF Con 2008, the annual Diabetic Foot Global Conference, to be held March 13 through 15 at the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel in Los Angeles.

"You might think of feet as an isolated area but it's really the exact opposite," said Dr. David Armstrong, professor of surgery, chair of research and associate dean of the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, North Chicago, Ill. "So much of everything else we do in medicine and so many signs of other problems emanate from the feet."

DF Con draws an array of experts from every state and more than 40 countries in specialties including infectious disease, biomedical engineering, orthopedics, dermatology, vascular medicine, neurology, surgery and physical rehabilitation.

"There's not another conference that has a larger impact," said Armstrong, who co-chairs the event with Dr. George Andros, director of vascular services and the Diabetic Foot Center of Providence St. Joseph in Burbank. "Everyone is a key leader in their field. DF Con has helped define the language of the diabetic foot."

An estimated 1,000 medical experts will gather in Los Angeles for the largest meeting of its kind in the world to explore and promote the latest innovations in treatment for neuropathy - loss of feeling - and other foot problems that affect an estimated 70 percent of the 189 million people who suffer from diabetes worldwide.

“DF Con is a referendum on podiatry and its central place in medicine,” Armstrong said. Armstrong is an international speaker on what he calls a global “tsunami” of diabetic amputations, with limbs lost every 30 seconds worldwide due to diabetes. Hardest hit by the trend are developing countries, most notably areas in the Pacific Rim and South Asia.

“We need to target failing systems of care like we want to treat failing schools,” Armstrong said at a conference last year in Singapore. “No foot or leg should be left behind.”

Armstrong, who grew up in northern California where he began learning the profession in his father’s podiatry practice, is one of a new breed of foot specialists expanding the field and offering help and hope through research.

In addition to his training as a podiatric surgeon, Dr. Armstrong holds a master of science in Tissue and Wound Healing from the University of Wales College of Medicine and a Ph.D from the University of Manchester College of Medicine in the United Kingdom.

He heads CLEAR, the Center for Lower Extremity Ambulatory Research at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, an international leader in the science of diabetic foot care, wound healing and limb salvage.

Work at Scholl’s CLEAR has resulted in nearly 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts in more than two dozen medical journals and 30 funded research proposals.

“Scholarship in podiatric medicine is exposing the world to our profession,” Armstrong said. “There are very few research groups in the world that are studying feet.”

New technologies and treatment that will be discussed during DF Con 08 include:

- Ultrasonic, water pick-like devices, used instead of scalpels for debridement or the removal of dead skin. The devices direct therapy more precisely and kill less tissue.
- Thermometry. Infrared thermometers held to the soles of feet help predict ulcers and avoid amputations.
- Kevlar-sandwich insoles that can eliminate blisters.
- Super-oxidized water that “explodes” super bugs on contact.
- Nip-tuck.Silicone injections that reduce calluses and add padding to neuropathic feet.

DF Con 08 is sponsored by CLEAR and Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank.

For more information, visit: www.dfcon.com or E-mail clear@rosalindfranklin.edu. Information on Scholl's Center for Lower Extremity Ambulatory Research is available at: <http://www.diabetic-foot.net/CLEAR/Home.html> or by calling (847) 578-8439

About Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science

Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is a national leader in interprofessional medical and healthcare education, comprised of the Chicago Medical School, College of Health Professions, Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine and School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Rosalind Franklin University recently received approval for its new doctoral program in Interprofessional Healthcare Studies – the first in Illinois – and will launch a new master in science in Psychology Clinical Counseling in fall 2008.

There are more than 15,000 RFUMS graduates in the United States and worldwide.