



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April is Amputation Awareness Month
Vascular Institute of Chattanooga's Mission: Prevention of Limb Loss

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. – Each year nearly 180,000 Americans undergo amputation of a limb, often as a result of complications associated with peripheral artery disease (PAD). April is Amputation Awareness Month, a time to draw attention to the many people affected by limb loss and how amputations may be prevented. Providers at Vascular Institute of Chattanooga (VIC) have taken the lead in therapies preventing unnecessary amputations and educating the Tennessee Valley on ways to prevent a potential loss of a limb.

A staggering 18 million Americans suffer from PAD a potentially life-threatening disease where plaque, including calcium, builds up along blood vessel walls, narrowing the arteries and reducing blood flow to the legs and feet, according to the Amputee Coalition, a national organization working to support people with limb loss. Of those suffering from PAD, up to 3.5 million have progressed to critical limb ischemia (CLI), the most severe form of PAD, where the blood vessels become dangerously narrow, and can lead to pain when resting, ulcers or sores, and gangrene. If left untreated, PAD/CLI can lead to unnecessary amputation.

“Limb loss is not uncommon and, sadly, the majority of amputations associated with PAD would be preventable with early detection and treatment,” said Chris LeSar, MD, a vascular surgeon and VIC founding physician. “More than 2 million Americans live with limb loss and that number grows by 185,000 each year. Our goals for Amputee Awareness Month are to heighten public awareness about limb loss and increase people’s understanding of prevention – especially those most at risk.”

Statistics

- The main causes of limb loss are vascular disease (54 percent), trauma (45 percent) and cancer (less than 2 percent).
- 60 percent of vascular-related amputations are preventable.
- Diabetes and vascular disease are the leading causes of limb loss.

- There are 2.1 million people living with limb loss in the US, and that number is expected to double by 2050
- More than 54 percent of patients were not assessed via diagnostic angiogram to determine if blood flow could be restored
- The estimated cost to American private and public insurance agencies is \$12 billion annually.

The risk for developing PAD rises with age and is highest for those over 50 years old. Smoking, the single greatest risk factor, increases the chance of developing PAD three to five times. But other common risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels, and heart disease.

“The most common symptoms of PAD are leg pain, leg muscle fatigue, coldness or numbness in the lower legs and feet or leg cramps,” Dr. LeSar said. “These are often overlooked because people think their PAD symptoms are a part of the aging process, and do not realize they are suffering from the disease. Waiting to talk to a doctor to get the diagnosis and begin treatment may allow the disease to progress to a more severe state.”

Many people are unaware of the causes of amputation and often see limb loss in just a few categories: the wounded warrior or the accomplished athlete. The fact is, limb loss affects every generation, from young to old and people from all walks of life. Those at greatest risk are people who have diabetes or a vascular impairment from PAD. Cancer is also a cause of limb loss, but traumatic limb loss can happen to anyone – from lawnmower and farm equipment accidents to motorcycle and car accidents.

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About Vascular Institute of Chattanooga

The Vascular Institute of Chattanooga, located at 2358 Lifestyle Way, is the area’s only comprehensive endovascular/vascular specialty center dedicated to amputation prevention. VIC has a full staff of experts providing patients with a complete medical PAD assessment, diagnostic ultrasound testing, onsite therapeutic interventions in an advanced endovascular surgical suite, and evidence based wound care therapy.

For more information, visit www.vascularinstituteofchattanooga.com or call (423) 602-2750.