

Why Lower Extremity Amputation Rates Are Higher in Black Patients: What Can Be Done to Improve Results

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The overall incidence and pattern of peripheral arterial disease is disparate in the African American patient. The prevalent presenting symptoms are chronic lower extremity ischemia with arteriographic patterns showing severe femoral-popliteal and infrapopliteal disease. Sidawy and colleagues (J Vasc Surg, April 1990) showed this several years ago, and similar reviews of arteriograms at my institution confirm these findings.

There is no specific reason why this pattern occurs, yet African American women who suffer a myocardial infarction have a 69% increased incidence of death when compared to the general female population. Correlating the risk of cardiomyopathy after myocardial infarction with that of amputation with peripheral vascular disease is therefore reasonable. In those patients with coronary artery disease, it appears that the number of risk factors may determine the severity of disease.

Socioeconomic factors, access to health care, and altered delivery of health care to minorities may all be factors. The number of risk factors as well as the severity of risk factors may be a factor. Whatever the cause, the result is a two- to fourfold increase in amputations between this and the general population. This study attempts to better define the causes of higher amputation rates in minorities by determining the number of risk factors in each amputated patient.