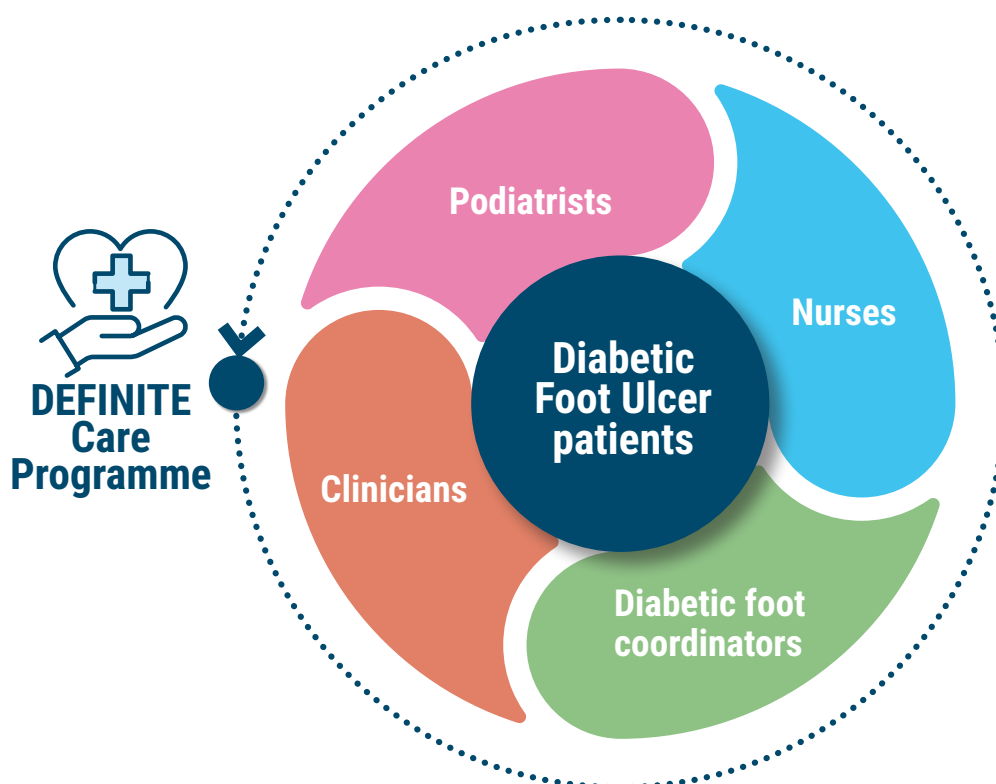


VBC in Practice:

The DEFINITE Care Programme for management of Diabetic Foot Ulcers

By **Dr Joseph Lo**, Senior Consultant Woodlands Health; and
Dr Elaine Tan, Associate Consultant, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics



OVERVIEW

Launched by the National Healthcare Group (NHG) DM Steering Committee, Diabetic Foot in Primary and Tertiary (DEFINITE) Care exemplifies value-driven care in action. Designed to meet the high clinical needs of diabetic foot ulcer (DFU) patients, DEFINITE Care coordinates treatment through a multidisciplinary team approach, integrating the expertise of clinicians, diabetic foot coordinators, podiatrists and nurses to provide swift, specialised care when needed. This integrated approach means that primary care providers continuously monitor and facilitate referrals, endocrinologists focus on diabetes control, surgeons manage severe cases, and podiatrists provide direct ulcer care. Diabetic Foot Coordinators streamline care coordination, helping to improve patient adherence and outcomes.

The programme has also explored wound imaging technology, including a patient-owned wound surveillance application with a demonstrated sensitivity of 100% in monitoring healing progress. Additionally, an AI model developed to analyse vascular wound images also shows promising accuracy, potentially enhancing clinical decision-making.

OUTCOMES

Since its inception in June 2020, DEFINITE Care has made a significant impact on DFU care, treating over 9,000 patients monthly. Notable results include:

Minor
amputation-free
survival:

IMPROVED BY
4.9%

Major
amputation-free
survival:

IMPROVED BY
9.0%

Inpatient
admissions:

REDUCED BY
0.98%

Hospital
length of stay:

REDUCED BY
5.5
days

Annual deaths
avoided:

270,
with a
cost-saving of
S\$24,498
per death

These outcomes underscore the program's role in reducing DFU-related complications and improving patient quality of life through a coordinated, value-based approach.

CONCLUSION

DEFINITE Care demonstrates the impact of integrating diverse healthcare services to address the complex needs of DFU patients. Through value-based care principles, the programme aims to alleviate the burdens of diabetic foot disease, ultimately improving the quality of life for affected patients. Challenges such as limited availability of podiatrist and the need for change management within NHG calls for ongoing attention to sustain and expand this model.



UNDERSTANDING VALUE-BASED CARE (VBC)

Value-based care (VBC) aims to enhance patient outcomes while controlling healthcare costs – a crucial approach for managing conditions with high clinical and economic burdens, such as diabetic foot ulcers (DFU). Implementing VBC can improve quality of life for patients with chronic conditions like DFU.

The DEFINITE Care Programme exemplifies principles that can guide broader VBC adoption in Singapore. Key strategies include:

To promote VBC, the following strategies are recommended:



Integrated Care Frameworks: Seamless, integrated care pathways are essential.

Nationwide adoption of successful projects like the (DEFINITE) Care programme can enhance transitions between primary and tertiary care.



Outcome Measurement and Reporting: Standardising outcome measures enable better comparison of healthcare providers based on quality rather than service volume, fostering transparency in healthcare outcomes.



Research and Innovation: Encouraging research into cost-effective treatment modalities can further scale programmes like DEFINITE Care for broader impact.