Survival Rates in Dysvascular Lower Limb Amputees

Reference:

Scientific Literature Review

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Podiatric Relevance:
Some medical and surgical specialties continue to lack a complete understanding of the importance of current limb salvage techniques. Specifically, they may question when partial foot amputations fail and eventually result in below the knee amputation. The concern is why the patient is subjected to multiple surgeries and not primarily referred to a vascular surgeon for below the knee amputation. This article contributes to the increasing body of evidence demonstrating the benefit of attempting foot salvage as a means of prolonging patient survival rates. Although certainly some partial foot amputations may ultimately go on to failure and eventual below or above the knee amputation, it appears that a well planned attempt at limb salvage is often in the best interest of the patient.

Methods:
This study was performed at the Manchester Disablement Services Centre for prosthetic/amputee rehabilitation covering a base population of about 3.5 million people. Specifically, 201 consecutive patients (mean age (range) = 69.4 years (25-93 years); 67% (134/201) male) from 1994 to 1995 with major limb amputation (transtibial or transfemoral) were followed for survival rates.

Results:
A total of 121 (60%) above-knee transfemoral amputations and 80 (40%) below-knee transtibial amputations were performed. Regarding the cause of the amputations, there was a diagnosis of diabetes and PVD in 34% (65/194), of PVD alone in 51% (99/194), of diabetes alone in 4% (7/194), of diabetes and PVD in 34% (65/194), and of other causes (embolism, acute ischemia, venous ulcers, etc) in 12% (23/194). In 7 patients no causation was available.

The overall 5-year survival rate was 48% (95% confidence interval (CI) = 41–55%), and the 10-year survival rate was 45% (95% CI = 38–52%). Individually, the 5-year survival rates for below-knee and above-knee amputations were 30% and 60% respectively, and the 10-year survival rates were 27% and 57% respectively. The survival rates for bilateral and unilateral amputation were 67% and 42% respectively.

Conclusion:
Similar to other published data, this study shows a median survival following major lower limb amputation of approximately 4 years. In this study, however, there was found to be a lower survival rate with patients who have had a below the knee amputation when compared to an above-knee amputation.