“Get a Pulse on PAD” Campaign Encourages Conversations About Peripheral Artery Disease

Nearly 80% of Black and Latino adults surveyed said their doctor had never discussed PAD with them despite being among the most at-risk patients.

March 4, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Approximately 70% of Americans do not know about peripheral artery disease (PAD), the most common vascular disease that contributes to 400 amputations performed each day in the country, according to a new national survey by the PAD Pulse Alliance.

To educate patients and provide resources to start the conversation, the PAD Pulse Alliance and its partners created the Get a Pulse on PAD campaign, a website that features a patient toolkit, educational videos and more.

PAD causes the arteries that transport blood to the extremities to narrow, often leading to reduced blood supply to the legs, which in turn can result in fatty plaque buildup in the arteries as well as pain, cramping and weakness in the legs and feet when walking, according to the American Heart Association. If left untreated, people with PAD have a higher risk for limb amputation and death from cardiovascular disease.

Nearly 80% of Black and Latino adults said their health care provider had never discussed PAD with them, emphasizing the need for a broader conversation surrounding this common vascular disease. What’s more, about 75% of Latino adults have one or more risk factors for PAD or know someone with one or more risk factors, yet 70% think they are not at risk for developing PAD, according to the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography & Intervention (SCAI).

“These new insights are particularly concerning among those most at risk and come at a time when a staggering 1 in 20 Americans over 50 years of age experience PAD,” said SCAI president George Dangas, MD, PhD, MSCAI, in the news release. “The survey confirms what we feared: millions don’t have the tools they need to help start a conversation with their healthcare providers because patients are unaware of their risks and the common signs and symptoms. That’s why we’re encouraging anyone with leading risk factors, diabetes, high blood pressure and use of tobacco products, to know your ‘three for PAD’ and talk to your doctor.”

The survey found that nearly 75% of Black and Latino adults reported having or knowing someone who has diabetes, high blood pressure or is a smoker, yet only 30% believe they could be at risk. Black folks are actually twice as likely to develop PAD and up to four times more likely to require amputation compared with white people. Latino patients tend to have more progressive PAD, leading to worse outcomes such as risk of amputation.

Experts warn to not ignore symptoms related to PAD such as leg pain that occurs while walking and stops with rest. Unfortunately, 91% of survey respondents said they would attribute pain to aging and therefore dismiss it.

Other symptoms of PAD include:

- Muscle weakness,
- Hair loss,
- Smooth shiny skin,
- Skin that is cool to the touch,
- Decreased pulses in the feet,
- Sores or ulcers on the legs of feet that don't heal and
- Cold or numb toes

"Screening for PAD is easy, quick, and non-invasive. Yet, this survey confirmed that critical patient-provider conversations addressing common symptoms aren't happening," said SIR president Alda L. Tam, MD, MBA, FSIR, in the news release. "If we can educate more people on the risk factors and early warning signs associated with PAD, it's our hope we can foster dialogue earlier between providers and patients to kick off screening and treatment—ultimately preventing amputations and saving lives."

To learn more, click #Peripheral Artery Disease. There, you'll find headlines such as "Routine Screening for Periphery Artery Disease Is Recommended," "HIV Is Independently Associated With Peripheral Artery Disease" and "Long-Lasting Stress Increases Risk of Heart Disease."

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