

Preface

It is estimated that diabetes mellitus afflicts 16 million people in the United States alone. Fifteen percent or nearly 2 million people will develop foot ulcerations in their lifetime. The consequences of these problems are not only important to the individual patient and their families, but to every healthcare system in the world. Diabetic foot ulcerations and infections are the main cause for hospitalization of the diabetic patient, thus placing a substantial financial burden on society. The direct and indirect costs for ulcer management and treatment may exceed \$10 billion dollars. This is particularly disturbing since the incidence of diabetes worldwide is increasing at an alarming rate. It should therefore be expected that the practicing physician will see lower extremity problems more frequently over the next several decades.

The great tragedy of diabetic foot problems is that they are probably the most preventable of all long-term complications. Over the past 20 years, the establishment of multidisciplinary clinics that include the services of diabetologists, podiatrists, vascular surgeons, infectious disease specialists, plastic surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, diabetic nurse educators, and orthotists has clearly shown that the rate of foot ulceration and lower limb amputation can be dramatically reduced. Furthermore, substantial improvement can be expected as we capitalize on our recent understanding of wound healing pathophysiology and convert this knowledge into the development of new and more effective treatments. Recently introduced growth factors and living skin equivalents are examples of such developments.

In *The Diabetic Foot: Medical and Surgical Management*, we have tried to reflect these trends and present to the reader both established techniques that are effective in the treatment of foot ulcerations as well as upcoming developments that we believe may have an impact on diabetic foot care over the next few years. We have also tried to emphasize the multidisciplinary approach to diabetic foot problems drawing on the long tradition of the Joslin-Beth Israel Deaconess Foot Center, one of the oldest and most experienced of such clinics.

We hope that *The Diabetic Foot: Medical and Surgical Management* will appeal to all professionals involved in the care of the diabetic foot. We are very pleased and privileged to have secured the collaboration of a distinguished panel of authors from around the world and wish to offer them our most sincere gratitude and appreciation. Without their extraordinary efforts, this book would not have been possible. Finally, we would also like to express our gratitude to Paul Dolgert and Craig Adams of Humana Press for their expert guidance and professional handling of this publication. Most of all, we thank them for their unending patience.

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The Diabetic Foot

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