

# Prevalence and correlates of foot pain: the North West Adelaide Health Study



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**How many people suffer  
from foot pain?**

**Who cares?**

# Why is this important?

- **Health service planning and delivery**
  - **Budgeting**
  - **Manpower / resourcing**
- **Research grant applications**
  - **Public health importance**
  - **Why should this research be funded?**

# Sources of prevalence data

- **National Health Survey (ABS)**
  - Nothing on foot problems
- **West Moreton Rural Health Needs Survey<sup>1</sup>**
  - **26%** of 600 people had foot problems
- **Randwick study<sup>3</sup>**
  - **36%** of 300 older people had disabling foot pain

1. AJPM 1999;33:45.

2. Rheumatology 2006;45:863.

# Sources of prevalence data

## ■ Limitations

- Generally small, unrepresentative samples
- Limited age range
- Limited analysis of associated factors
  - Age, sex, body mass index, etc

- **The North West Adelaide Health Study**
  - **General health survey**
  - **Commenced in 2000**
  - **NW region represents**
    - **half of the population of Adelaide**
    - **one quarter of the population of SA**
  - **Range of socio-economic areas**

# The NWAHS - methods

## ■ Stage I

- Recruited by electronic white pages
- Independent living only
- Within each household, the person who had the most recent birthday was invited
- Interview and clinic assessment
- n=4,060 (response rate 49%)

# The NWAHS - methods

## ■ Stage 2

- 2<sup>nd</sup> interview and clinic assessment
- Focused on musculoskeletal disorders
- n=3,206
- Foot question:
  - On most days do you have pain, aching or stiffness in either of your feet?



# Results – sample (n=3,206)

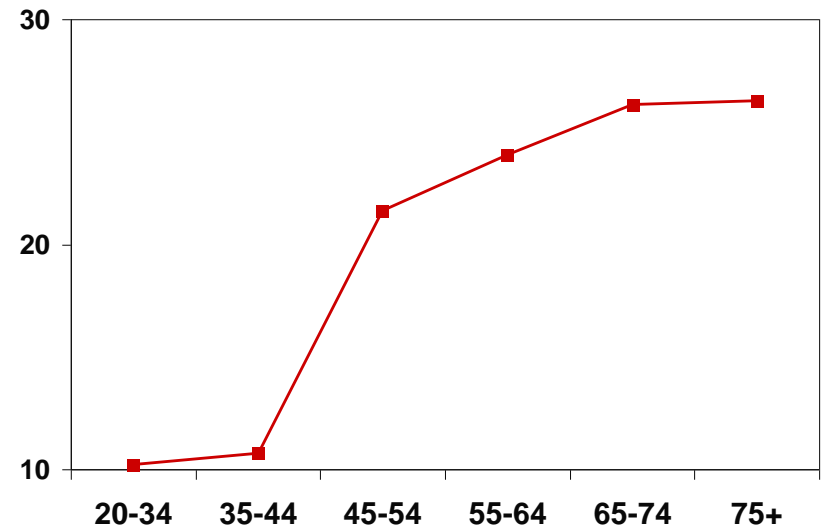
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Variable	
Sex	
Male	1573 (49.1)
Female	1633 (50.9)
Age	
20 to 34 years	912 (28.4)
35 to 44 years	650 (20.3)
45 to 54 years	568 (17.7)
55 to 64 years	437 (13.6)
65 to 74 years	325 (10.1)
75 years and over	315 (9.8)
Body mass index (kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) – mean (SD)	
Males	28.0 (5.0)
Females	27.7 (6.3)

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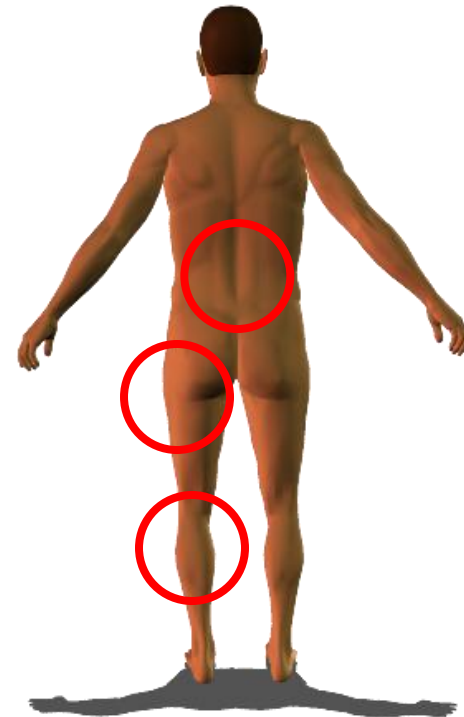
# Results – prevalence and associations

- Overall prevalence = 17.4 (16.2 – 18.8)%
- Associated with:
  - Increased age
  - Female sex (1.4 X)
  - Obesity (1.9 X)
  - High waist:hip ratio (1.7 X)

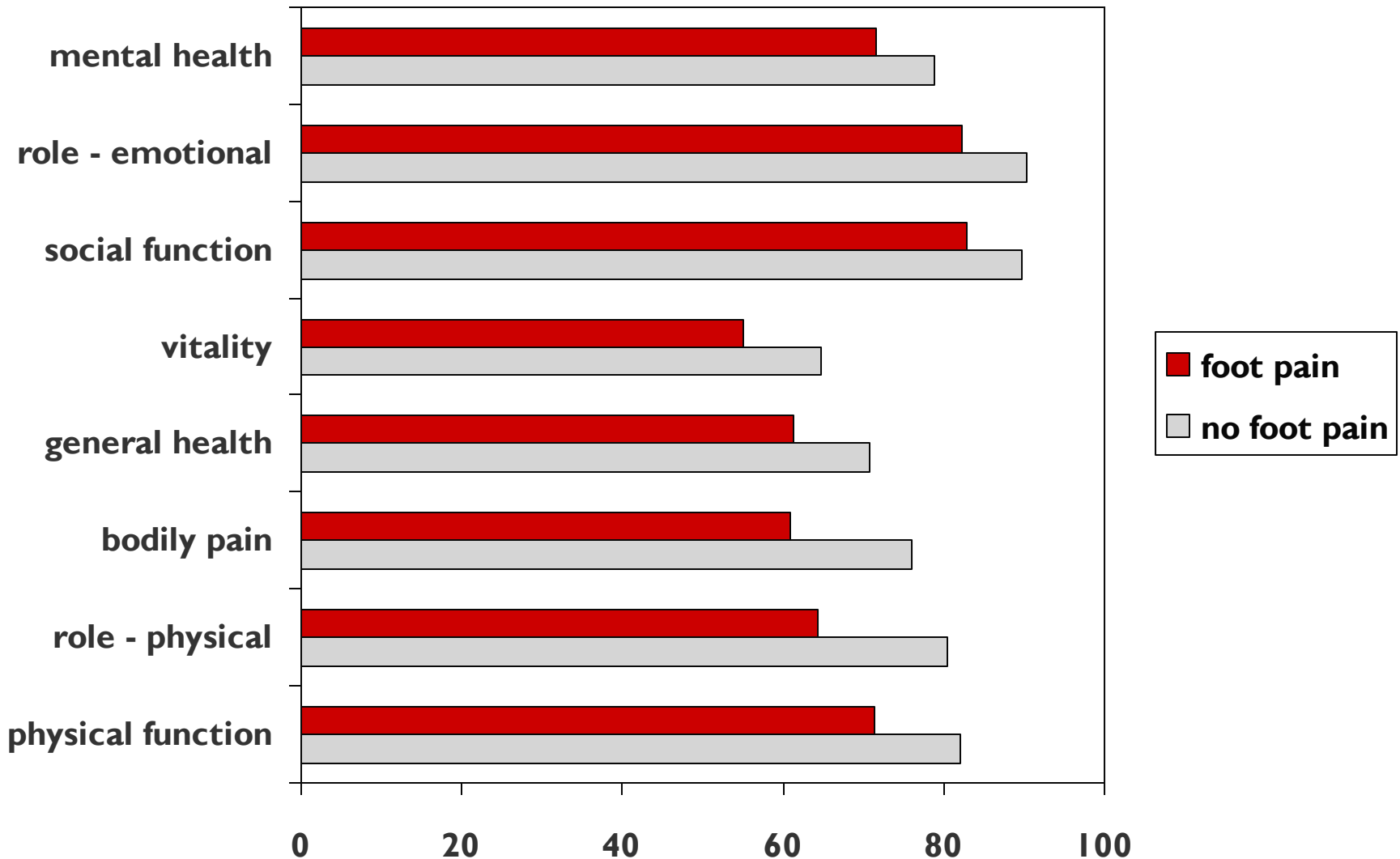


# Results – pain at other sites

- **Foot pain also associated with:**
  - **Knee pain (2.4 X)**
  - **Hip pain (2.4 X)**
  - **Back pain (2.4 X)**



# Results – health-related quality of life



**How many of these people  
seek podiatry treatment?**

# Results – podiatry utilisation

- **9.5%** had seen a podiatrist in the last year
  - Only **17.7%** of those with foot pain
- Those who consulted a podiatrist were more likely to:
  - Be female
  - Be aged > 45 years
  - Earn less than \$20,000 / yr
  - Be obese
  - Have chronic medical conditions
    - OA, o/porosis, diabetes, CVD



# Results – podiatry utilisation

■ Those with foot pain who had **NOT** seen a podiatrist in the last year were more likely to:

- Be male
- Be aged 20 to 34 years
- Earn \$40-60,000 / yr
- Be smokers



■ ...and were less likely to have chronic medical conditions

## ■ Key findings

- **Nearly 1 in 5 people have foot pain, aching or stiffness**
- **Associated with age, female sex, obesity, pain in other regions**
- **Significant impact on health-related quality of life**



# Discussion

- **Podiatry services do seem to be being accessed by those with the greatest need**
- **However, a large proportion of younger people with foot pain are not consulting podiatrists**
  - **Are they consulting other health professionals?**
  - **Low level of awareness?**
  - **Is the supply adequate enough to meet the demand?**

## ■ Limitations

- No clinical foot assessments performed
- Foot pain based on single question

## ■ Future plans

- NHMRC project grant, 2009
- “North West Adelaide Foot Health Study”
- n=1,000

# Conclusion

- **NWAHS provides the best available epidemiological evidence of the prevalence of foot pain in Australia**
- **Very useful information in relation to policy and research**

# Acknowledgements

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- **Queen Elizabeth Hospital**
- **NHMRC**

# References

- **Hill CL, Gill T, Menz HB, Taylor AW. Prevalence and correlates of foot pain in a population-based study: the North West Adelaide Health Study. *J Foot Ankle Res* 2008;1:2.**
- **Menz HB, Gill T, Taylor AW, Hill CL. Predictors of podiatry utilisation in Australia::the North West Adelaide Health Study. *J Foot Ankle Res* 2008;1:2.**



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