

Fiji doctor says number of diabetic amputations 'depressing'

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Transcript

A doctor in Fiji says the large number of amputations that have to be undertaken because of diabetes is depressing. The Foundation of Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development's Doctor Jone Hawea says the age of those who need limbs removed is getting younger, and they're doing around 700 amputations a year. Jone Hawea explained to Lucy Smith how the diabetes epidemic is affecting Fiji.

JONE HAWEA: I mentioned the fact that we are anticipating low productivity levels in the not so near future. We know for a fact about 700 amputations a year although the productivity level is expected to be low, we are amputating people as young as 30 to 40 years old.

LUCY SMITH: What do you think contributes to such high statistics of diabetes

JH: The ability of people to access services that allow them to say whether or not they have diabetes most of my patients who I have amputated didn't find out that they had diabetes when they present with a foot lesion. Which is already rotten and that's when they find out they have diabetes.

LS: What type of intervention would you like to see in order to stop so many people having amputations?

JH: I'd like to see more programs that work in context of our local people. We have few big ethnic groups which contribute a lot to the statistics of diabetes in this country. So I would like to see a utilization of this ethnicity traditional structures. Make use of the churches and cultural structures that already exist, and have a lot of power to drive people one way or another in terms of changing their behaviour. I would like to see programs that use these more. And so also on a national scale our leaders have been shouting that diabetes is a crisis especially amputation is a crisis, everyone is saying that it's a crisis but it's not reflective in our budgets and what's coming out on a national level on a policy scale.

LS: What's like for you having to amputate all these is it numbing how big this epidemic is ? or is it more imminent than ever to you?

a lot: Is it a depressing environment to be working in, to see your own people especially when you follow them up in the clinics and they come back and they tell you their wives or their husbands have run away, after these many months because they couldn't take the load. It gets to us, It got to me. I got really feeling almost depressed and the surgical department we are just at the receiving end of all these problems. We are at the bottom of a cliff. We are not controlling the amount of people coming in, and day in and day out we now have a dedicated operating theatre just for the surgical management of diabetic foot infections, and so it is a depressing environment. We are seeing a lot of very good movements right now. a lot of very important people in Fiji have come up and are putting their hands up and saying we want to do something

about this, so I would like to hope for a better future for our population.