

Please Doc, just cut it off !

**A Qualitative study of patients who
have undergone elective amputation**

Deanna Devitt MD

PGY3 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

University of Ottawa

May 2nd, 2009

Co-investigators

Nancy Dudek MD MEd

Meridith Marks MD MEd

Lara Varpio PhD

NBC headline: The run of his life (Feb 8th/09)

- Tom White
- Motorcycle accident 1981
→ Left ankle injury
- 26 years later – requested **elective** amputation



Two different views

- “One of the best decisions I ever made was to have an amputation”
- Other patients with a major limb impairment absolutely refuse an amputation

Amputation vs. Limb reconstruction after lower leg trauma

- Patients who undergo limb reconstruction generally have MORE
 - Operations
 - Complications
 - Re-hospitalizations
 - Rehabilitation time
- Outcomes are SIMILAR in terms of
 - Pain
 - Quality of life
 - Function

Background

- The literature does not tell us what factors influence the decision of a patient to have an amputation.
- Why are patients satisfied or unsatisfied with their decision?

Purpose of study

- To determine the factors that influence one's decision making when choosing to electively amputate a functionally impaired lower limb

Methods

- The protocol was approved by The Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre Ethics board
- Charts from patients seen in The Rehabilitation Centre's outpatient amputee clinic were reviewed to identify patients that meet the inclusion criteria

Criteria for study subjects

■ Inclusion criteria:

- Patients who have had an elective amputation for a functionally impaired lower limb.
- Patients whose amputation was more than one year ago.

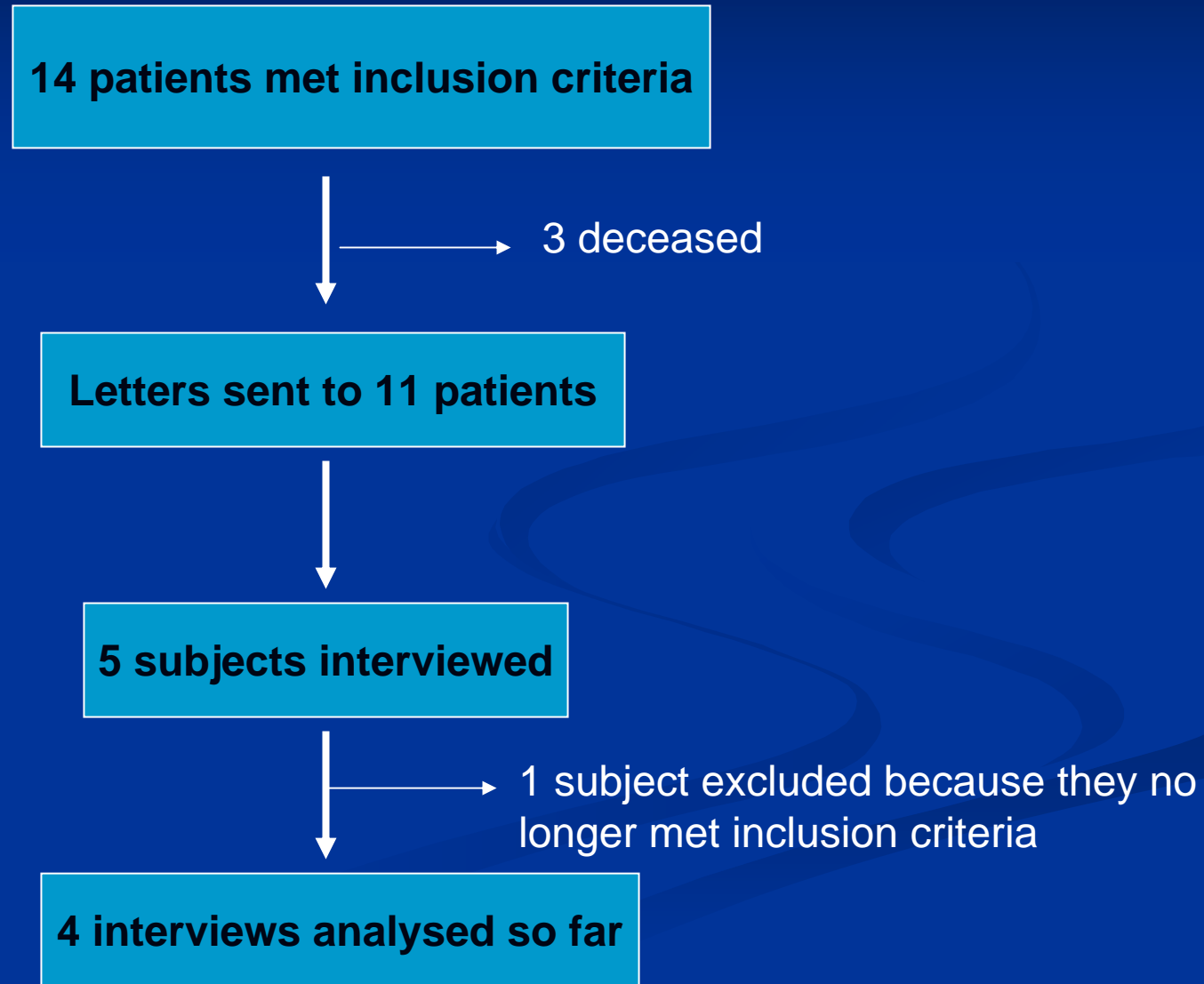
■ Exclusion criteria:

- Patients who underwent an amputation because of an acute risk to their health (i.e. cancer or infection).

Methods

- Semi-structured interviews with each subject (lasting 45 to 90 mins)
- Narrative analysis
 - Analyzed by three independent reviewers → triangulation
 - Identification of key themes
 - Creation of common “story”

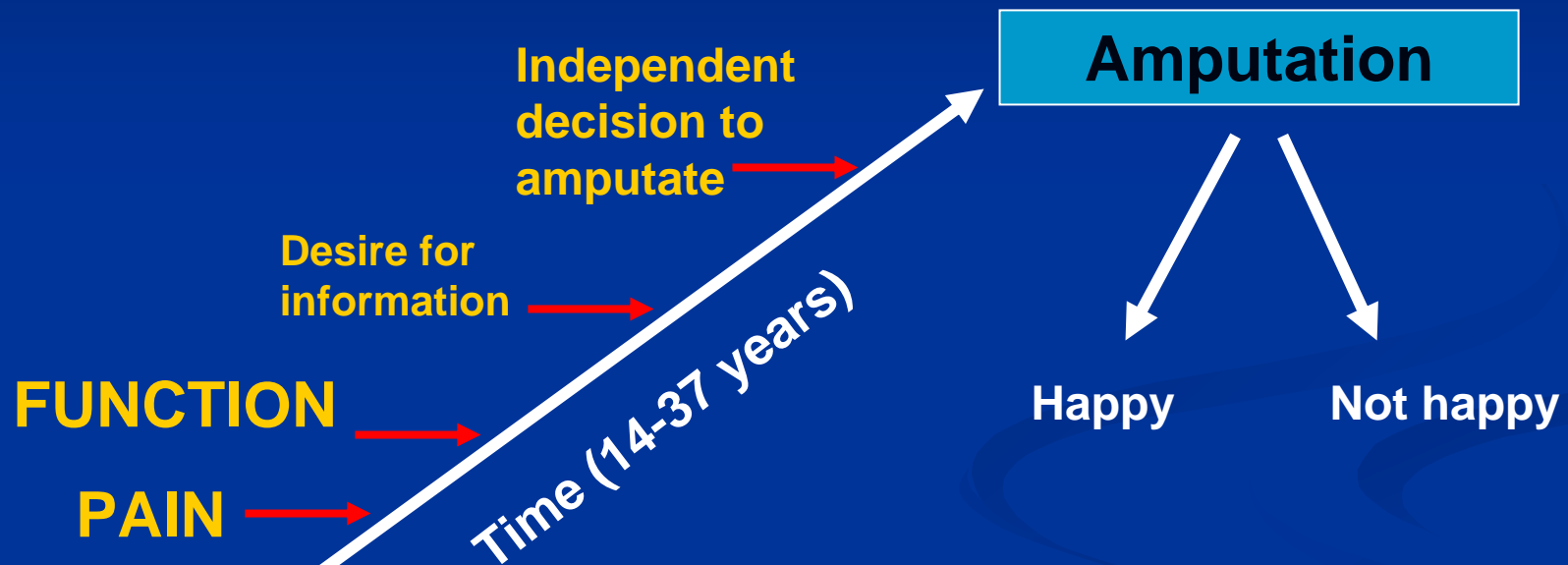
Preliminary Results



Results - Demographics

- 4 subjects
- 2 females, 2 males
- Initiating event:
 - 1 polio, 3 trauma
- Age at amputation:
 - Mean = 46 years (min 33, max 58)
- Years between initiating event and amputation:
 - Mean = 24 years (min 14, max 37)
- Years between initial idea of amputation and the surgery:
 - 20, 5, 2, 1

Results – Key factor model (preliminary data)



- Relationship between amount of pain /impairment pre-op and level of satisfaction with amputation ?

- Expectations ?

Pain - preliminary data

- “...and it was just like a bad toothache, you know you want to get rid of it...”
- “...and I really think if I had chopped it off with a hatchet that wouldn't have hurt as much as what the foot was hurting.”



Function - preliminary data

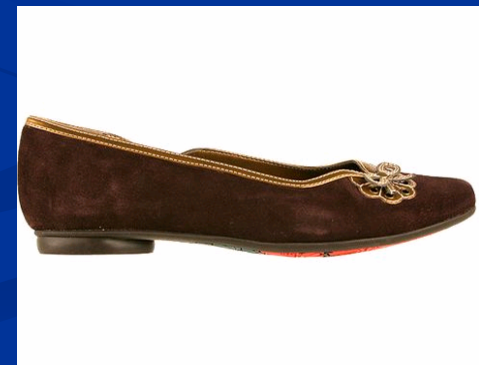
■ POOR function

- “He cut it off and once it was off I asked him to wrap it up in brown paper so I could take it home and feed it to the dog because it would be the first time it was useful in my whole life.”



■ Hope for IMPROVED function

- “I wanted to improve my function. Be able to wear shoes. Walk for extended periods of time, it was a question of trying to improve that limb that wasn't working very, very well.”



Information – preliminary data

- Yes

“I tried to get as much information as possible before I had it done...and maybe I should have looked a little harder”

- No

“Even if I were to have tonnes of information, it doesn't matter, when you want it done, you want it done”

What does NOT seem to matter?

- Opinion from family and clinicians
 - All subjects came to the decision on their own
 - Strong sense of self
 - Sense of identity independent of body parts

- Body image

“make it look like a leg, what for? That’s only for people to say, “Oh doesn’t that look nice?” It doesn’t bother me, I couldn’t care less; it works! And what I lived with was truly ugly. This even though it’s not covered, looks great to me.”



Preliminary discussion

- Too soon for conclusions but...
 - PAIN and FUNCTION were prominent factors in the decision making process
 - It's a long process to make the decision
 - Some patients want a lot of information while others do not
 - Minimal role for
 - Opinion from family and clinicians
 - Body image

Summary

- Understanding the VALUES and IDEALS patients consider when requesting an elective amputation is a necessary step towards improving physicians' abilities to assist in the decision making process



Questions?