

FAVER FEATURES

A monthly e-magazine focused on improving the health of Veterans through research and education.



On A Quest To Save Limbs: Exploring Ways To Improve Health Outcomes For Veterans With PAD

By Hillary Rowe

Vascular Surgeon Dr. Olamide Alabi is on a quest to save limbs and save lives.

The 2010 University of Nebraska School of Medicine graduate specializes in peripheral artery disease or PAD. PAD affects anywhere from eight to 12 million Americans and is a narrowing of the arteries serving the legs that can cause pain and difficulty walking, and even lead to ulcer formation, gangrene, and eventually, amputation. Currently, there are 185,000 amputations per year in the United States with vascular disease, including PAD, being the main cause of amputations.

Continued on page 2

WHAT IS PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE (PAD)?

- PAD is a narrowing of the arteries serving the legs that can cause pain and difficulty walking, and even lead to ulcer formation, gangrene, and amputation.
- The condition results from atherosclerosis, or clogged arteries, making it harder for your blood to carry oxygen and nutrients to the tissues in those areas.
- PAD affects anywhere from eight to 12 million Americans.



On A Quest

"After finishing my vascular surgery fellowship in Oregon, I felt I had to come down to the South because amputation rates are higher here and I thought I could help all these patients and put a dent in that number," said Alabi. Studies consistently show that Southern states rank among the worst in the U.S. for health and wellness outcomes.

Alabi left Portland, relocated to Atlanta, GA, and began her mission to reduce limb loss, splitting her time as a Vascular Surgeon at the Atlanta VA Health Care System and as an Assistant Professor of Surgery at Emory University School of Medicine. She spent hundreds of hours talking to patients and students, as well as primary care doctors, vascular surgeons, and vascular interventionalists about effective strategies to detect and treat PAD to reduce amputations. "But as many procedures as I did and as many talks as I gave in the community, I got really tired. I realized this was not the right approach to help the greatest number of people," said Alabi, "I still wanted to put a dent in this amputation epidemic and knew it could be better addressed through research."



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Continued on page 3

PAD RISK FACTORS

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Atherosclerosis
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Age above 60 years

On A Quest

Alabi enrolled in a Master of Science in Clinical Research program and started grant writing. To date, she's received four grants, her most recent two from the VA Office of Research and Development (VA ORD) and the Georgia Clinical & Translational Science Alliance (GA CTSA). Alabi is focusing her research on Veteran reported outcome measures in PAD care for the VA's Research Supplement to Increase Diversity grant, while the GA CTSA grant explores 90-day outcomes after PAD interventions.

A strong component of Alabi's current research is exploring the social and political determinants of health. According to the CDC, Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes and run the gamut from conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, to forces shaping the conditions of daily life, including economic, social, and political policies and systems.

"I wanted to know if we were to link our data set of those individuals getting amputations to the social vulnerability index, what would be the outcomes," said Alabi. "For people who live in more vulnerable neighborhoods, do those people not get, or are they less likely to get these vascular assessments? Or do these imaging studies or procedures look at or improve their blood flow?"

Continued on page 4



IMPROVING PAD OUTCOMES



Get plenty of physical activities to help prevent PAD or improve symptoms of PAD.



Do not use tobacco. Smoking increases the risk of PAD and makes PAD symptoms worse.



Control high blood pressure and manage high blood cholesterol and diabetes.

Source: CDC and Veterans Health Library

On A Quest

In the U.S., SDOH is often used in tandem with the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), a tool developed by the CDC and its subagency the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), as one way to determine how best to allocate resources during times of crisis like natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or human-made events. SVI uses U.S. Census data to determine the social vulnerability of every census tract based on 16 social factors including poverty and crowded housing. These factors are then broken into four themes: Socioeconomic status; Household composition, and disability; Race/ethnicity and language; and, Housing or transportation status. The underlying assumption is the higher the SIV scores in an area, the more likely it will need more resources during a crisis.

Alabi plans to share “the linkage to the social vulnerability index” at an upcoming Association of VA surgeons meeting, whilst her work on PAD and healthcare utilization research will be published in two journals later this year. For the latter, preliminary data is showing that the VA Health Care System is advantageous for Veterans diagnosed with PAD. “We see differences within the VA system that are advantageous for veterans, particularly for veterans from structurally disadvantaged communities,” said Alabi.

Although specific studies exploring SDOH in the private sector have yet to manifest, Alabi is optimistic that her research can be of benefit.



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Dr. Alabi

Save The Date



ATLANTA VA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

2023 Research Day

May 18
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Celebrating discoveries and emerging medical innovations in Veterans' care; recognizing VA researchers' accomplishments; and providing learning and networking opportunities for attendees.

Emory University School of Medicine
James B. Williams Medical Education Building
100 Woodruff Circle, Atlanta

Keynote Speaker

Judith Ford, PhD
2022 National VA Middleton Awardee



Dr. Ford is recognized for her groundbreaking translational research in psychiatry, which has transformed the understanding of psychotic illnesses in Veterans. Her work has reassured patients and their families that patient symptoms have a neurobiological basis.

Dr. Ford is a research career scientist at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and codirects the Brain Imaging and Electroencephalography Laboratory at the University of California in San Francisco.

Award Of The Year Presentations

- Atlanta VA Investigator
- Lab Manager
- Research Administrator
- Research Coordinator

Register by April 16 at <https://forms.office.com/r/0kNH3KRuu4>

Submit Abstracts by 5 p.m. on April 15 at https://emorymedicine.sjc1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8I0gqZMFf34Y090

Award Nominations/ Queries

Ashley Scales, Ph.D., MPH
Director of R&D Operations
Ashley.Scales@va.gov

EVENTS

7:15 a.m. Registration
8 a.m. Opening
11:30 a.m. Keynote
12:45 p.m. Network & Lunch
Shuttle services between VA and Emory available

BREAKOUTS

1:30 p.m.
• Career Development Award (CDA)
• Conducting Clinical Studies at the VA
• VA Data Analytic Core
Registration required

SHOWCASE

Highlight your research during the Poster Presentation and compete to win prizes. To participate, submit your scientific abstract by 5 pm on **Apr 15**.

NOMINATE

Submit your candidate(s) for Award of the Year. Nominations open on **Feb. 13** and close on **April 16** at 11:59 p.m.



On A Quest

continued from page 4

“Perhaps there are some best practices in the VA’s integrated healthcare system that we can employ within the private sector to improve outcomes and ensure that patients are all treated the same.”

In her quest to save limbs, Alabi is clear on the direction she wants to take her research. “I want to look at those individuals who have a first-time diagnosis of PAD and their guideline-directed medical therapy. We do know from Medicare data that many of them are not on the correct medications or at goal with managing their comorbidities,” explained Alabi. “Not many researchers have looked at whether these Veterans eventually get to those goals over time. And then if they do or if they don’t get to those goals within a specific period, does that increase or decrease the risk of limb loss in the future.”

For more information on PAD visit <https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/RelatedItems/3,82926>

Curriculum Vitae: Olamide Alabi, M.D.



Positions

- Vascular Surgery Specialist with extensive experience in Peripheral Artery Disease and Aortic Disease, Atlanta, Georgia
- Assistant Professor of Surgery, Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy, Department of Surgery, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, Georgia
- Staff Surgeon, Atlanta-VA Health Care System, Atlanta, Georgia

Education

- M.D. from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine, Nebraska (2006-2010)
- Residency, General Surgery, Loma Linda University Medical Center, California (2010 – 2015)
- Fellowship, Vascular Surgery, Oregon Health and Science University, Oregon (2015 -2017)



Research Studies Focus - Peripheral Artery Disease

- NIH/NHLBI SRP sub-award R25HL105446, Exploring Peripheral Artery Disease Treatment Intensity in Veterans, December 2020 – December 2021
- Emory University Health Services Research Center, Examining Ninety-Day Outcomes Following Lower Extremity Revascularization for Peripheral Artery Disease: A Pilot Project Using the Vascular Quality Initiative (VQI)-Linked- Medicare Database, December 2020 – December 2021
- Program for Retaining, Supporting, and Elevating Early-career Researchers at Emory (PerSEVERE) through the Georgia CTSA NIH UL1- TR002378, Exploring Ninety-day Outcomes after Peripheral Artery Disease Interventions, March 2022 – present
- VA Office of Research and Development Research Supplement to Increase Diversity, Exploring Veteran Reported Outcome Measures in Peripheral Artery Disease Care, September 2021 - present



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WANTED
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS



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