

DOCTORS^{of} PODIATRIC MEDICINE

Highly trained
specialists keep
Americans
on the move



Walking on two feet is distinctly human. Our mobility is so basic we take it for granted until we need help to retain or regain it. Whether we are athletic or just pursuing the joy of an active and independent life, we have doctors of podiatric medicine (DPMs) to keep us able and agile.

DPMs, also called podiatrists, diagnose and treat disorders, diseases, and injuries of the foot, ankle, and lower extremities. They can specialize in areas such as sports medicine, surgery, biomechanics, and diabetic foot care, among others.

About 2,000 podiatric medical doctors practice in California. They are licensed and regulated by the California Board of Podiatric Medicine.

Podiatric medicine is an elite specialty

In the early 1900s, a few physicians like Dr. William M. Scholl recognized the lower extremity was being ignored and worked to establish a new profession of specialists. Podiatric medicine was born and has become an elite specialty, particularly in California. Once known as chiropodists and later podiatrists, these specialists are now known as doctors of podiatric medicine (DPMs) or podiatric physicians. Here are some things you may not know about this medical specialty.

DPMs are highly trained. They:

Graduate from four-year podiatric medical schools closely paralleling the general medical school curriculum, but with an emphasis on biomechanics and conditions affecting the lower extremity.

Must complete the first two years of a three-year graduate medical education residency program before being licensed. Other doctor licensing boards only require one year.

Must meet peer-reviewed continuing competence requirements every two years in order to renew their licenses. The California Board of Podiatric Medicine (BPM) is still the only doctor-licensing board in the country to implement this long-recommended reform.

Have embraced lifelong learning and prevention of patient harm more than any other medical specialty.

Have seen public complaints drop 50 percent since the Board of Podiatric Medicine initiated continuing competence more than 10 years ago. This accomplishment is unique among licensed healthcare professionals.

The California Podiatric Medical Association and the State licensing board have done much more to promote good medicine, including:

Maintaining Primary Source Verification: The "gold standard" for screening health professionals, i.e., only accepting evidence of credentials received directly from the schools and other training, testing, licensing and law enforcement agencies. Uniquely, the Board wrote this into its law so that no one could consider it open to waiver.

Emphasizing quality over quantity: There are fewer than 2,000 DPMs practicing in California, but they all adhere to high standards.

Publicly disclosing information on cases referred to the Attorney General for prosecution, instead of waiting until the Attorney General prepares a formal Accusation. BPM is one of the few health licensing boards to do this.



Here are some other facts about DPMs:

DPMs diagnose, prescribe, treat, and perform surgery within this scope, as provided in the State Medical Practice Act.

DPMs will often specialize in areas such as surgery, conservative foot care with expert knowledge of ambulation and biomechanics, or the care and preservation of diabetics' feet (to prevent amputations and keep patients mobile).

Whether generalists or specialists, DPMs often are the first to see patients or to recognize their general health problems and will refer to other physicians as appropriate.

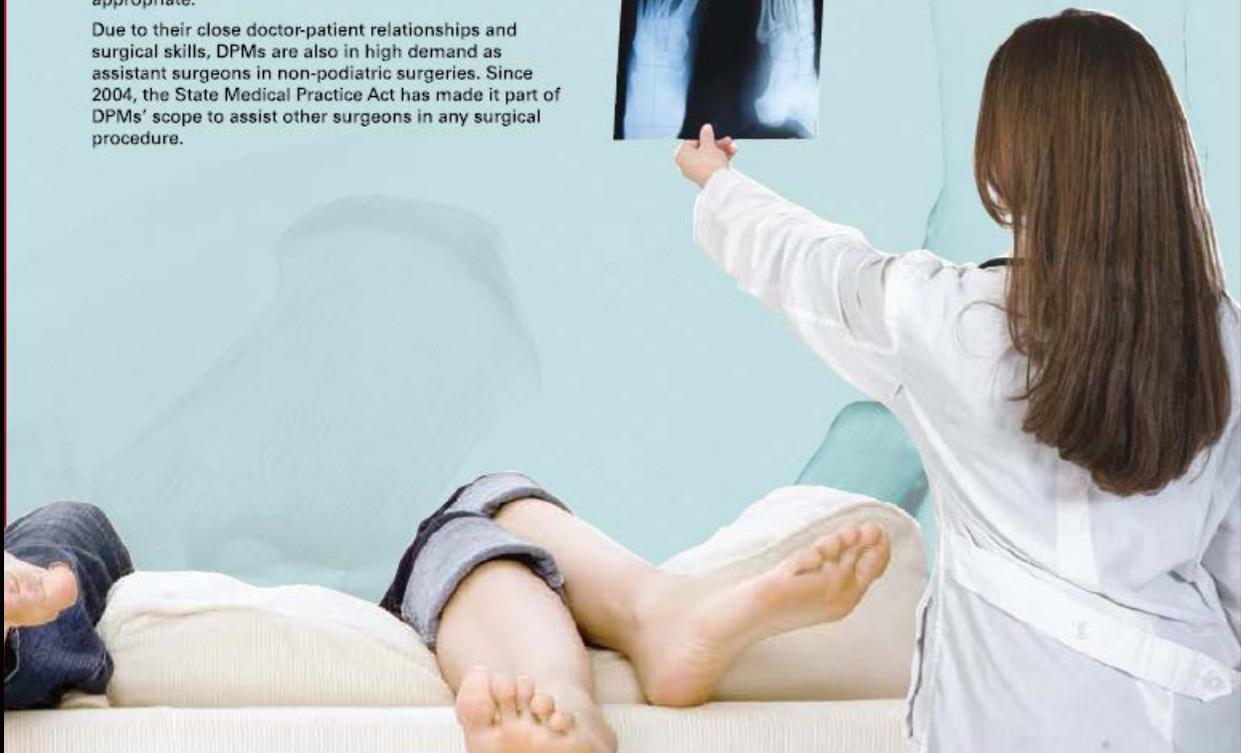
Due to their close doctor-patient relationships and surgical skills, DPMs are also in high demand as assistant surgeons in non-podiatric surgeries. Since 2004, the State Medical Practice Act has made it part of DPMs' scope to assist other surgeons in any surgical procedure.

How to choose a doctor of podiatric medicine

The Board of Podiatric Medicine Web site—www.bpm.ca.gov—is rich with advice and information on how to choose a doctor of podiatric medicine.

You can verify the license of any DPM licensed in California or file a complaint by visiting the Board's Web site.

You can also call 800.633.2322.



For more information,
contact the California Board
of Podiatric Medicine

California Board of Podiatric Medicine

2005 Evergreen St., Suite 1300
Sacramento, CA 95815

www.bpm.ca.gov

tel: 916.263.2647

800.633.2322 (information & complaints)

fax: 916.263.2651

BPM@dca.ca.gov

Information about DPMs is also available from the California Podiatric Medical Association. You can search the association's Web site for members of the professional association who practice in your area. Doctors do not have to be members of the association, but membership is one of the things patients often look for when evaluating a doctor's credentials.

California Podiatric Medical Association

2430 K St., Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95816

www.calpma.org

tel: 916.448.0248

800.794.8988



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