

**What Do We Want?
Where Are We Going?**
By Jeffrey Frederick, DPM



10 Maple Street, Suite 301
Middleton, MA 01949

978-646-9091

978-646-9092 fax

office@aappm.org

www.aappm.org

What do we want? Where are we going?

Jeffrey Frederick, DPM

My name is Jeff Frederick and I am a Podiatrist. I am a member of a community of doctors that has unlimited potential, the problem is we just don't know it. Most of us spend our energy and time fighting the everyday battles in our offices. But how many of us have stepped outside the safety of our routines to see the potential for our professions growth?

Podiatry has significantly evolved since its' inception. But have we reached a plateau? Have we considered both as a community and as an individual, what is necessary to move to the next level? What have you personally done to be part of the future of podiatry? Many of us are quick to complain about problems. It's just human nature. But how many of us are willing to do something about it?

There are many things that each of us can do to better our profession, and our lives. First, are you part of the big picture? The big picture means being a part of the podiatric community. That is, a member of the American Podiatric Medical Association. Sure, there are things that the APMA does not do well. But, there are many more things that they do admirably. How can we be a successful community if each of us is not willing to be part of our national organization? Colleagues that are not members often tell me their reasons range from it costs too much, to they can get the benefits without paying the price, and it really doesn't help them directly! What could be said is, these colleagues are being selfish. Yes, selfish. I often feel like I am carrying these doctors on my back. And you should feel that way also. We all share a common voice that forms the APMA. This common voice can and does accomplish great things. What if each of us adopted the attitude of these non-members? Let someone else do the work, pay the dues. What if we all thought, it's ok, not to want to be part of the community? How much would we accomplish as a profession? More than likely, nothing. Allowing these colleagues of ours to continue with this behavior affects us all. I strongly believe that it is our responsibility to speak with these non-members and help show them the way. There is no down side of getting these colleagues on the outskirts of the community to become part of the big picture. How can these non-members, whom are judged by people outside our profession as representatives of Podiatry, be a good example of our profession? How can they be connected and held to the higher standards of our podiatric community? How do they get their information? How are they able to be held accountable for their actions? If we are going to move mountains and advance podiatry to new heights we all need to get there together. Our failure to "call" these colleagues on their lack of participation will continue to be a roadblock to our future.

What do we want?

Perhaps the best way to advance Podiatry is to ask ourselves this question. In my opinion here is what we want; better patient outcomes, better reimbursement for our services, increased respect among our colleagues, recognition for our expertise in the field of medicine, non-discrimination by insurance companies, removal of roadblocks that prevent delivery of medical foot care, a consistence voice with insurance companies, a long range plan for navigating the ever changing medical world, more time with our patients and less time filling out paperwork, a cohesive group of peers that can work together to improve our environment and lives. We want; a way to make our offices run smoother, a way to have more fun at work, a way to make our patients happier, a way to legitimately increase reimbursement for our services.

How can we achieve these goals?

Predictably, we begin one step at a time. The best place to begin is with ourselves. What are you doing on a daily basis to better yourself and podiatry? When was the last time you attended a local podiatry meeting? Your support and connection with your community begins there.

Your input, your ideas, your needs, your problems are more than likely the same issues as your colleagues. It is more effective to combine your resources and act with unity, with one voice to address these issues. On a local level, this is what your state association does. Your state association is only as strong as it's members and their involvement. It would be great if we could just sit back and say here's the problem fix it. The reality is that your input is necessary to fix it. Are you actively helping to make decisions within your organization?

Are you an ambassador for podiatry?

Are you positively presenting your profession everywhere you go? Are you furthering the cause of respect among other professionals? Do your patients consider you a highly ethical, caring and skilled professional? Whether you like it or not, everything you do will reflect upon every one of us. Are you courteous and pleasant outside your office? Everywhere you go, you are judged, which reflects on our profession. What is your patients' perception of your office? Are patients coming into your office seeing a poorly run office? Are they waiting in your reception room for a lengthy amount of time? Does your staff appear well trained and efficient? Do your patients perceive that you are in a hurry? Are you always doing things the same way in your office and not updating procedures and policies that could increase patient satisfaction and outcomes? Are you rolling out the red carpet for every person that walks into your office? Not only the patients, but every vendor, maintenance personnel and staff member should be considered and treated as the most important person you will meet. You can further the communities perception of podiatry exponentially by how you make people feel. It has been said that many people don't remember what you said, but how you made them feel. Make people feel important. It will do wonders for podiatry. And as a side effect, it will do wonders for you!

The future of podiatry is always in the hands of the next generation. What have you done to mentor a new or younger colleague? How are you embracing the next generation? What have you personally done to help a new doctor? Have you helped him/her with practice decisions? Have you introduced them to the hospital where you are on staff to expedite their application? Have taken the time to say hello and welcome them to the community?

The personal benefits are enormous for each of us when podiatry is promoted in a positive light. More people will understand what we do. This will lead to more opportunities to provide care, more patients seeking your care! Additionally, Insurance companies will realize we are a cost effective profession with excellent patient outcomes.

How each of us are perceived within our communities on a daily basis has a profound effect on Podiatry as a whole. Being accountable for our decisions and actions and being part of the bigger picture are the keys to Podiatry's future. Strive to improve yourself. Consider for 2006 the following goals: Attend your local state podiatry meeting (find out what is happening in your community get involved with your future), attend a seminar to improve your office (The American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management has 3 great seminars each year), mentor a young doctor (call a new doctor in your community to say hello), take the time to call a colleague that is not a member of the APMA and seriously discuss the benefits for all of us for their participation. Like all things, change happens one small step at a time. Let's begin the journey now!

Dr. Frederick is the President of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management and The Michigan Podiatric Medical Association. He practices in Southfield Michigan.