

# Do You See Enough Kids?

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Pediatricians are busy and looking for ways to serve their patients more efficiently. Their schedules are full of croup, fever, flu and yes...foot pathology. The opportunity to cultivate podiatric pediatric referrals is present in every pediatric practice nationwide. Here are some simple techniques you can employ to have a thriving pediatric referral network.

First, decide exactly what it is that you can treat well that is commonly seen in a pediatric practice. Almost every podiatrist can treat verruca, ingrown nails and pronation. Many pediatricians have neither the time nor the desire to treat these problems. You can expand into pediatric heel pain, apophysitis, in-toeing and sports injuries. The key is to market your skills effectively to the pediatric gatekeeper, which is fun and easy to do.

Start your marketing effort with a visit to a local pediatric practice or a pediatrician that you may know. Go just before lunch at the end of the first session of patients, as it is likely that you will catch the doctors and nurses available to see you. Other physicians are almost always brought back to the doctor's office and promptly seen (unlike salesmen). We always offer an in-service to the staff on children's foot pathology. Focus on the pre-determined pathology that you will be treating. **We ask for referrals.** Before leaving, the in service is scheduled and we leave our office *infocard* (a business envelope sized card with a picture of the doctors, what we treat, where we are and maps to get there on it). Tell the pediatrician that you will see their patients promptly and handle any emergencies immediately.

Following the visit, when the physician calls you, consider it a request to see the patient right away since most doctors would feel that they are imposing by asking for an appointment that day. Offer it before they ever have to ask and I assure you it will not go unnoticed. You will see more patients and soon you will see their partner's patients. Keep in mind that when a child is sick or in pain that the parents become worried and apprehensive. Prompt appointments help the patient, the parents, the referring doctor and ultimately your practice.

Communication with the patient must be in their terms and age appropriate. I always explain what is going to happen to the parents and then to the child and ask if everyone understands. If the treatment will hurt, be honest with the child without creating fear. At the end of the visit all appreciate a reward (sticker, trinket or Gummy Feet).

**Quick Tip** – When your patient is being treated for verucca, discuss the contagious nature of warts with anyone else in the treatment room. Give them a free screening on the spot and encourage the rest of the family to come in for the same on future visits. You will find more warts and schedule them as patients as a result of your diligence!