

Podiatech: Not Your Mamma's Orthotics

By Jeanette Smith

When Apple wanted to make the personal computer accessible to everyone, the tech world said they were crazy. When Airbnb wanted people to open up their homes to strangers, the hotel industry said they were crazy. And when **Podiatech** tells you that you can turn a profit by making quality, custom orthotics in 30 minutes right there in your office while the patient waits—you might also say they are crazy.



Dr. Brian Ting

But that's exactly what their system provides, and Dr. Brian Ting of the Advanced Foot and Ankle Center can attest to this. "I'm a skeptic," Dr. Ting says. "But I met with Nolan and saw the product, and

you often get the same materials in your orthotic," Nolan Dubord, the Podiatech US Sales Manager, says. "If you're an athlete or a geriatric patient, you're likely to get the same orthotic. It's not precise, and Podiatech allows you to add that precision." The science and art of orthotics needed an update, and Podiatech came on the scene to do that.



Nolan Dubord

About Podiatech

Podiatech is the medical arm of Sidas, a French company that started in 1975 by providing custom boot inserts for skiers. After expanding to various other sports, Sidas started its Podiatech brand in 1985 to serve the French podiatric community. Nolan Dubord brought the brand to the US for the first time in 2012.

"I've been using this since September of last year, and my patients have loved it."

—Dr. Brian Ting

I thought, 'wow, there's some credibility in this.' I've been using this since September of last year, and my patients have loved it."

Updating Orthotics

Podiatech's disruption in the custom orthotics industry is much needed. In the 1970s, jogging became a popular pastime, leading to many new injuries and foot pains among people who had not previously been active. At the same time, manufacturing processes such as vacuum forming were advancing, and new materials such as thermoplastics were being used in foot orthoses. All of this led to a boom in custom orthotic prescriptions.

Over 50 years later, the casting, manufacturing, and materials are much the same as they were then. "Whether you're a hundred-pound girl or a three-hundred-pound man,

The Premium Podiatech Station

The Premium Podiatech Station is where the magic begins. Setup requires an area of about 3ft by 4ft for the machine itself, storage for an inventory of materials, and a stand-alone grinder. The Premium Station provides a seat for the patient, a podoscope with lights and a mirror to highlight foot issues, two "pillows" for taking foot imprints, and an oven to process the orthotic materials.

Everything can be done with the patient in the room because the process involves no chemicals, fumes, or dust. This process can also increase patient trust and satisfaction. "If a doctor prescribes a medication, the patient goes to the pharmacy and picks it up that day," Dubord points out. "But then they get prescribed an orthotic, and it takes three weeks. Then a device comes back, and they're a little bit reluctant. With the Podiatech system, they're part of the whole process. They step on a unique silicone pillow where the impression is held under vacuum pressure, and there's their impression. They see the blank come out of the oven and go into their impression. Then they stand on it, they see you trim it, and you put it in their shoe. They know they were part of this."

Dr. Ting agrees, saying, "patient outcome is very important be-



Podiatech *(continued)*

cause I'm a private practice. Not only is it quicker for me to get results, but the patient can also give me a response quicker too. Right then, instead of three months later."

Working the station is simple and in-person training is provided when the machine is dropped off. Dr. Ting says, "I was very hesitant in the beginning. And it does take a good team or staff to create this product. You have to know how to cast and how to use this device. But I think like with anything, the more you do it, the more you're automatically going to get good at it."

And the Podiatech system is made to last and is easy to care for. "We've only had one vacuum pump fail," Dubord says. "I coached them on getting to where it is. The pump itself is fixed with an Allen screw and has a plug that's just like plugging something in an outlet. All our stuff is designed so that anybody can fix it."

In addition to the Premium Station, Podiatech offers a modular unit that can be stored away and brought out when you need it or transported to another location for more convenient fitting. "This is the model used by our pro and NCAA sports teams," Dubord says.

Podiatech Premium Orthotic Materials

The Premium Podiatech Station works with their blanks (flat materials ready for shaping), of which there are over 400 options. "As a company, we don't believe that everybody should get the same thing," Dubord says. "That's what has always blown my mind in the orthotic world. It's the same device, the same densities, the same top covers, the same shells across the board, on repeat. But you look at people, you look at their feet, you look at their pathologies, you look at what they're doing with it, and that's all different. The orthotic needs to match their profile."

Of course, there's no need to stock every type of blank. Many podiatrists choose several that fit what their office sees most. "Nolan gives you a good outline of common ones that they use or what historically has been good," says



Dr. Ting. "He'll give you samples of it, and you practice to see which product you like the best."

Having a wide variety of blanks allows you to custom tailor to every patient's needs. The resulting orthotics are "robust, like a traditional polypropylene orthotic," says Dr. Ting. "I wanted to make sure the product was diversified enough to be able to work for the factory runners, marathon runners, geriatric patients, pediatric patients... to make sure the product has that versatility. And yeah, it does."

Podiatech has added even more versatility into their materials line with their new Uni line of orthotic materials. "Inevitably," Dubord says, "Someone's going to say, 'I want that one because it has a heel cushion, but I need that one because it has a forefoot cushion.' And now, you can change it all around. This gives the practices a lot more flexibility without the inventory commitment."

"There are already different things you could add to the orthotic to your liking, based on the pathology," says

**Users of the Podiatech system
can now opt to create
custom orthotics by choosing
unique combinations of materials.**



Dr. Ting. Modifying an orthotic for a particular foot shape or condition is as easy as adding a stabilizer or corrective wedge. But users of the Podiatech system can now opt to create custom orthotics by choosing unique combinations of materials.

Dubord compares the process to cooking. "We really like to say that we sell the kitchen and the ingredients, but you cook however you want. We don't force anybody into certain techniques," he says. Whether a doctor opts for the Uni line, the Uni Max (made for D width and wider), or the standard blanks, they'll end up with an orthotic truly custom-tailored to their patient's needs.

Continued on page 142

Podiatech *(continued)*

Disrupting Your Bottom Line

While the Podiatech system and materials are clearly a step up for patients, how does it benefit you and your practice?

Your initial investment with Podiatech is \$13,000 USD. That covers the Premium Station, delivery, installation, training, and blanks for making 45 pairs of orthotics. “Those forty-five pairs offset the cost to the practice,” Dubord explains. “The inventory covers the entire start-up, so when you’ve utilized them, you’re already in the black. We are a materials company, and we create the equipment to work with the material. We do not see our equipment as a profit center.”

The profits for the taking are all yours. Dr. Ting estimates he makes eight or nine pairs of orthotics a week. “We get preauthorization from an insurance company within a week or two,” Dr. Ting says. “Then they come in; we cast them; we dispense on the same day. They come back three weeks later and tell me whether they like it or not. If it needs to be adjusted, I can adjust it right there.”

Doing the same with an orthotics lab would mean waiting for the initial orthotics for weeks, waiting more weeks for changes—and paying for shipping both ways. After that, “it’s not hard to get up to one hundred and fifty bucks in costs,” Dubord points out. “If it’s done in-house, forty dollars is the average cost to the practice. And they don’t have to figure in the cost of the equipment because those initial forty-five blanks paid for it.”

Just because you invested in the Podiatech system does not mean you need to be using it all day, every day to make a profit. “Orthotics is not something I do all the time,” Dr. Ting says. “It’s only one of the things I do to help my patients. I also do lots of surgeries. This is just something else that I have in my toolbox to help my patients.”

Conclusion

“We recognize that it’s a heavy lift,” Dubord says. “It is disruptive. But we also prove that when you take that leap, it’s only a one-inch drop. It’s not a leap of blind faith.” *If you’re ready to take the step toward a Podiatech system, contact Nolan Dubord today (dubord@sidas.com) or [click here](#).*
