

Time to Mobilize an Army of Podiatric Patients

BY BARRY H. BLOCK, DPM, JD

It's no secret that the medical specialty of podiatric medicine and surgery faces multiple challenges. The applicant pool to our colleges has diminished to a dangerously low level. Despite some legislative victories, podiatrists have still not been able to become incorporated in Medicaid (Title IX). To achieve success in these critical areas, we will need more than the collective strength of our professional associations. We need to use a secret but powerful weapon that each practitioner has... our patients!



Just do the math. There are approximately 17,000 podiatrists who, according to *PM's* latest Annual Survey, see 79.4 patients a week. Based on a 50-week-per-year practice, that amounts to approximately 67.5 million patient encounters. Think of all the possibilities that opens. Placing career information in your reception room can geometrically improve the applicant pool. So can bringing up this topic when treating teenage patients or parents of young adults. This will complement our mentoring efforts and our participation in high school and college fairs.

Turning to politics, we should also be enlisting the support of our patients. After all, who knows the value of podiatric care better than those who have experienced the benefits firsthand. Yes, it is important for us to contribute to APMAPAC and state PACs, but it is more important to get our patients involved. This can be done by providing pre-printed bullet points for letters and contact information. Their pleas to legislatures do not carry the potential as being viewed as self-serving. Don't hesitate to urge your patients to contact their representatives to support bills that benefit them. Sometimes, it's just a matter of asking!

Respectfully Submitted,

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