



# Paul Kesselman, DPM

## PM Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

He's podiatry's foremost authority on DME.

BY DAVID J. FREEDMAN, DPM

**D**r. Paul Kesselman, a long-time resident of Oceanside, Long Island, NY, was raised in Brooklyn, NY.

His undergraduate degree was at SUNY Albany, NY which allowed him to meet Rachel, his beloved wife, during his senior year. He pursued his podiatric medical career at the Illinois College of Podiatric Medicine (ICPM) in Chicago and then got married during his second year. Rachel was busy as a computer programmer analyst as he went on to complete his podiatric medical school training. His initial career took him to an internship in New York City, where he met a lifelong friend Rob Snyder.

He loved private practice, running two office locations and being attending surgeon at two hospitals with residency programs. His work with the late Dr. Harry Goldsmith enabled him to pursue his other love, educating the profession. He related that he met Harry Goldsmith at a meeting in Connecticut about 25 years ago. When he received a call from Harry a few months later, he thought he was being investigated and audited. Instead, Harry asked if Paul had any public speaking experience. Paul's answer was, "not since my bar mitzvah!" They laughed together and Harry ultimately referred Paul to the Louisiana Podiatric Medical Association, his first



Dr. Kesselman

official speaking engagement.

Paul wants everyone to know that he owes a great deal to Harry Goldsmith. In fact, several years later, Harry told Paul he needed to leave private practice (as had Harry) because he could help so many more patients by educating the profession. Paul just told Harry he could not ever do that because he would miss seeing patients. Harry told Paul he would get over it. Paul stated, "I think he was right".

Another connection that he developed subsequently was his being introduced by Ken Malkin to Barry Block at an NYPMA meeting. Barry and his wife Hermine treat Paul like another son, they have mentored and fostered his growth as a writer. Their mutual respect and affection for one another is easy to appreciate. These two individuals--Harry and Barry--have been critical in his overall development as the DME expert Paul is today!

Today, we know Paul to be an advocate for podiatric durable medical equipment (DME) but ultimately, he has expanded his knowledge and expertise to multiple aspects of the DME universe, having participated in reviews of numerous products. Podiatry allowed him to pursue this endeavor. Paul wanted everyone to know that Harry was his idol, and he wanted to learn as much as possible from him, but unfortunately, Harry passed away too soon. After being introduced to Barry Block, he began a regular schedule—which continues to this day—of writing articles for *Podiatry Management*, and the profession has benefited from his commentary--coding tips, new product information, and always the latest news on DME policy and insurance coverage.

By now, you should have the feeling that Paul's success lies with his

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*Dr. Kesselman (from page 99)*

intense commitment to serving podiatry. He has always gone above and beyond to provide guidance, inspiration, and support to all. His ability to navigate challenges with vision and determination has set him up as a role model for both new and seasoned practitioners.

He is a spiritual man and loves his synagogue, plays music, with occasionally playing and singing publicly, and he loves his community. As a

Eventually in private practice, he was the team podiatrist for many local area high schools. Eventually, an orthotist colleague was referred to him by one of Paul's greatest sources of new patients (an internist). This orthotist further reinforced and cultivated Paul's knowledge of AFOs, KAFOs as well as other extremity orthotics and prosthetics. Paul voraciously read the policies covering those products, spoke with policy writers and eventually their medical directors. The rest is history.

further cements his legacy as one of the most impactful figures in the history of podiatric medicine.

## Tributes

**Alan Bass, DPM, Manalapan, NJ**

In 2019, after becoming a certified professional coder, I was interested in starting a coding and compliance company and knew that I needed to have an expert in DME as part of my vision. The only person I could think of was Paul Kesselman, but I had no idea how to get in touch with him. As fate would have it, a few days later, I had a new patient in my office ask me "if I happen to know his cousin, Paul Kesselman". Whether it was coincidence or fate, I was glad that I saw that new patient. I asked for Paul's contact information and the rest is history. Paul and I formed PARE Coding and Compliance, and now with our new partner David Freedman, DPM, we've launched TheDoctorline.com, a new website to help DPMs with coding and billing issues.

Over the years, I have gotten to know Paul and his wife Rachel well and could not ask for a better friend, partner, or colleague. While I have always practiced podiatry alone, my partnership with Paul has allowed me

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family man, his devotion to his family, whether it was for his late brother (a savant) or mother, and his living father or sister has enabled those around him to look up to Paul as a family leader.

According to Rachel, he loves the Catskills, and the area he goes to decompress is called Fleischmanns New York. It is where his great grandparents were farmers, had 16 children, and where his family has owned a property for over 100 years. This draws all his family together--Rachel said he knows all his cousins and the magnet is their family property. To further show he is a family man, he treasures his relationship with his daughter Alana; she is married to Brandon and they have two sons, Blake 10 and Evan 6. You can often find him visiting them in Westchester; he is a proud father and grandfather.

A little more of the back story... one can easily say Dr. Kesselman is a true educator of DME within podiatry. Dr. Kesselman has spent decades advocating for the proper utilization, understanding, and implementation of DME in podiatric practices. Paul had an excellent background in biomechanics both at the graduate level at ICPM and undergraduate level through NYCPM with Dr. Dennis Shavelson and other faculty of NYCPM. This enabled him to examine and treat stars of the Broadway stage.

Rachel remarked that he would give talks during bus rides when asked questions from colleagues at FAPA conferences in the Caribbean and Mexico. All the participants on the shuttle bus ride got a 2-hour education by Paul. He loves to share and give back, and his work has empowered countless practitioners to expand their services, follow the rules, and improve patient outcomes. He has

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the ability to deliver information that all practices need when it comes to the federal and state regulatory landscapes, and he has ensured that DME remains accessible and beneficial for all DPMs.

His tireless efforts have elevated the standard of care across the profession, leaving an indelible mark on generations of podiatrists, physicians, CPeds, and O&P practitioners. For that, we thank him for his remarkable achievements. Dr. Kesselman has been honored as this year's recipient of the prestigious *Podiatry Management Lifetime Achievement Award*. His inclusion in the *PM Podiatry Hall of Fame*

to give back to our profession. His knowledge of DME is unparalleled. There is no one who deserves to be installed into the *PM Podiatry Hall of Fame* more than Paul Kesselman. Congratulations Paul on a well-deserved honor.

**Joe McTernan, Director of Health Policy and Advocacy, American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association**

I first met Paul Kesselman, DPM more than 10 years ago when APMA and AOPA agreed to collaborate on the development of standard definitions that could be used to determine

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*Dr. Kesselman (from page 100)*

how to properly code foot orthoses described by codes L3000, L3010, and L3020. When I arrived for the first meeting of this group and Dr. Kesselman introduced himself, I knew he was a force. His obvious passion for podiatry was evident. His vision

we have had many great “discussions” over the years.

Our professional relationship really cemented itself when Dr. Kesselman joined me in service to the Durable Medical Equipment Medicare Administrative Contractor (DME MAC) Advisory Councils. This is a group of provider representatives that meet with

tend back-to-back council meetings.

I look forward to continuing to work with Dr. Kesselman on important issues like reducing arbitrary useful lifetime restrictions for orthoses and eliminating unreasonable same or similar claim denials. Dr. Kesselman is a true champion of podiatry and I can't think of a better individual to include in the *PM Podiatry Hall of Fame!*

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**“Dr. Kesselman is a true champion of podiatry.”**

**—McTernan**

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for the need to create definitions for things as basic as the height of the heel cup of a foot orthosis has proven prophetic as some of the work of that group has become widely accepted within the clinical and payor community. Dr. Kesselman is never afraid to express his opinion and is open to discuss why it may be different from yours. He loves a good challenge, and

the senior DME MAC staff, including the medical directors, on a quarterly basis. Dr. Kesselman and I serve together on all four councils and have worked very closely on highlighting issues and concerns that are important to our respective memberships. One of my favorite memories of our council service was when we drove together from Nashville to Indianapolis to at-

*J. Kevin West JD, Employment, Health Care and Litigation Law, Parsons Behle & Latimer, Boise, Idaho*

I am pleased to write this tribute regarding Paul Kesselman, DPM. Paul was one of the first podiatry experts I met when I began defending podiatric physicians 25 years ago in Medicare/Medicaid. He, along with the late, great Harry Goldsmith, DPM, were two of my mentors in those early years of audit defense work. From my initial encounter with Paul, I was impressed with several things. First and

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*Dr. Kesselman (from page 101)*

foremost was his encyclopedic knowledge in the realm of DME coding, billing, and policy.

Over the years, I have retained Paul multiple times to defend practitioners caught in the crosshairs of an audit, and Paul was an invaluable asset as part of our defense team.

Second, I greatly appreciate and admire Paul's ability to communicate

**Fred Ferlic, MD, President of Tayco and an Orthopedist**

As a friend, all the usual words to describe him would be loyal, intelligent, engaging, interesting, trustworthy. However, the most important word would be honesty. I have sought Paul's advice in some difficult circumstances, and each time he directed me to the correct path with a simple phrase, "This is the right thing to do." I think the trait of honesty is part of

During a hiatus from the PDAC, Dr. Kesselman and I collaborated on several provider education programs. The presentations addressed many fears, myths, and incorrect interpretations of the coding, coverage, and payment rules of DMEPOS. His patience in explaining the details and gently correcting perceptual errors was exemplary. Mixed with his sense of humor, the programs provided solid education in an entertaining manner that was well received. Countless errors in billing were corrected and/or prevented by his educational efforts.

**Ed Prikaszczikow, DPM**

I have had the pleasure of working directly with Paul Kesselman, DPM for over 15 years as a member of the APMA Health Policy & Practice Committee and DME subcommittee. Dr. Kesselman has a knack for being able to find the appropriate people to engage with to get the job done. This includes DME MAC Contractor Medical Directors, and leaders of various DME medical associations and other stakeholder groups.

His outstanding asset is an in-depth understanding of the complexities in the world of DME, which includes policy, documentation, coding, and methods necessary to facilitate

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**"You can always rely on Paul to give you the correct answer, however uncomfortable."—Ferlic**

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in both the spoken and written word. I was an English major and have always valued this increasingly missing talent. Paul's articles, speeches, and oral advocacy were always well-crafted, understandable and persuasive. Lastly, I appreciate Paul's native sunny disposition. He is enjoyable to be around, even in the serious matters that have brought us together professionally. My best wishes to Paul for this well-deserved honor!

**Curt Bertram, Senior Manager, Clinical Affairs, O&P Insight, Chair AOPA Coding Committee**

"As a healthcare consultant to the orthotics and prosthetics (O&P) industry, I was referred to Dr. Paul Kesselman as a subject matter expert in HCPCS coding. At the time, I needed a sounding board and the chance to connect with someone who spoke my language to advance my coding knowledge. My first phone call with Dr. Kesselman revealed to me that he had the knowledge and experience to be a mentor for me. Over the years, our professional relationship has grown to be mutually beneficial, not only to our clients but to each other. We routinely consult with each other to the benefit of our clients and the podiatry and O&P professions.

Over the years my relationship with Dr. Kesselman has matured to be one of mutual respect across our professions. Paul not only is an expert in his craft; he is a kind, thoughtful, and engaging leader. I am proud to call him my colleague and friend."

the definition of what makes Paul Kesselman. You can always rely on Paul to give you the correct answer, however uncomfortable. It is very reassuring to know that no matter the problem, I am doing the right thing. I believe Paul feels the same way about me.

As medical colleagues, Paul and I have a symbiotic relationship in the field of musculoskeletal study. Our backgrounds are similar, mine as an orthopedic surgeon and his as a podiatrist. He shares his love of knowledge with me, and vice versa. We can agree or disagree, but it always ends

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**"Dr. Kesselman has a knack for being able to find the appropriate people to engage with to get the job done."—Prikaszczikow**

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up that we both have gained a better understanding of the problem. I could not be happier for Paul Kesselman, my friend and medical colleague, for being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

**Doran Edwards, MD, Retired General Surgeon as the former medical director of the PDAC**

I interacted with Dr. Kesselman many times. I was always impressed with his dedication to asking the right questions and correctly understanding the answers. In the nuanced world of Medicare, that is a rare trait. The articles he wrote because of his questions were always spot on.

changes in these areas. He also can recognize the areas of DME that are the most important to podiatry as suppliers of DME. He continues to volunteer his personal time for the sake of the podiatry profession.

**Scott Haag, JD, MSPH, Vice President, Health Policy & Practice and Center for Professional Advocacy, APMA**

Dr. Paul Kesselman has been and continues to be an invaluable asset and expert in DME and reimbursement matters to APMA and our members, and serves as an integral part of

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APMA’s advocacy team. As the story goes, earlier in his career when Paul was looking for an area in which to become more adept and thereby to serve his profession, an orthotist colleague suggested that Paul focus on DME, and the rest as they say is history. Since then, Paul has been part of many of APMA’s key DME strategic initiatives such as in leading our DME webinar education efforts, developing APMA’s documentation package for Therapeutic Shoes for Patients with Diabetes (TSD), and leading APMA’s DME workgroup for over a decade.

Paul represents APMA nationally

has made him an invaluable resource for the podiatry profession. Through his service on numerous councils, committees, and workgroups, he has actively shaped the landscape of podiatry. His extensive contributions, including countless lectures and articles, have directly and indirectly influenced the knowledge and practices of nearly every podiatrist.

Dr. Kesselman’s remarkable achievements are rooted in his unwavering dedication to his family, particularly his wife Rachel, their children, and grandchildren. In the nearly two decades I’ve had the privilege of working alongside him, I’ve witnessed his consistent demonstration

had on their outcomes. He appreciated the burden of stigma and self-neglect that patients with a psychiatric diagnosis often face. Paul has always shown great empathy and compassion—the ability to put oneself in the patient’s or family’s shoes—an essential quality for any physician.

What makes Paul truly special, however, is not only his patient advocacy, but also his intelligence, human drive, ability to stay ahead of the curve, and to be a single point of contact and reliable source for his fellow doctors. In this world full of misinformation and disinformation, Paul has done his due diligence to have the right medical and management information. As others have already noted, his educational efforts over the span of his illustrious career make him a most deserving and “durable” inductee to the Hall of Fame.

**“What makes Paul truly special, however, is not only his patient advocacy; but his intelligence, human drive, ability to stay ahead of the curve, and to be a single point of contact and reliable source for his fellow doctors.”—Goldberg**

*Bernie Yonk, MD (internist)*

I have known Paul for almost forty years as we worked together in Brooklyn, NY where we both had our primary offices and hospital affiliations. I know Paul to be a stellar podiatrist. His dedication to patient care is without question. He has dedicated his entire career to improving patient outcomes and the advancement of new and improved surgical techniques and products used in the treatment of podiatric deformities. It is a pleasure to work with him. It has been a pleasure to have him as a colleague in helping people get better. Keep going, Paul. PM

on the various DME MAC Jurisdiction councils and has helped lead our broader DME Stakeholder Coalition efforts with several key external associations and other organizations. He has assisted with advising APMA’s advocacy efforts related to DME and related items, including key roles in supporting our therapeutic shoe efforts at CMS and on Capitol Hill, cleaning up L3000 language, supporting applications for new HCPCS codes, as well as providing guidance to APMA and our members related to remote physiological monitoring (RPM). Paul’s discussions on DME are a key part of our Contractor Advisory Committee and Private Insurance Advisory Committee (CAC -PIAC) meetings and Health Policy and Coding Committing meetings. We look forward to many more years of his guidance and leadership. We wish Paul well in receiving this much deserved award.

*Kevin Rosenbloom, CPed*

Dr. Kesselman is the foremost expert in the dynamic field of medical policy. His profound understanding of the intricate rules and regulations governing patient treatment and billing

of steadfast values in his interactions with family, friends, and the community. He is one of the most compassionate and caring individuals I know, approaching every day with genuine love and kindness.

*Jeffrey Goldberg, DO, Brooklyn, NY*

Every great physician and leader needs colleagues from all specialties and walks of life to accompany them on their professional journey. I have known Paul Kesselman since we were classmates in the 9th grade orchestra, band, and eventually in high school, where we composed and orchestrated music together for our school shows. During advanced placement biology course, as Paul meticulously and skillfully dissected a frog, I knew then that he was headed to be a great surgeon. We remain close friends and colleagues to this very day, as do our children and their children.

During the period when Paul managed his thriving podiatry practice in Brooklyn, New York, we often shared and cared for mutual patients. Paul not only had the clinical ability to care for their conditions, but he also recognized the impact that mental health



**Dr. Freedman** has significantly contributed to the podiatric profession in his capacity as Chair of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) Coding Committee since 2018 and has been a coding committee member since 2004. He is currently the senior Medicare Carrier Advisory Committee podiatric representative for Maryland. He is a Certified Professional Coder (CPC) and is a Certified Professional Medical Auditor (CPMA) by the American Academy of Professional Coders. He is board certified in foot surgery by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery and is a Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons and the American Society of Podiatric Surgeons.