



The Benefits of Growing Your Custom Orthotics Practice—and How to Do It

Prescribing custom orthotics helps patients medically and podiatry practices financially.

BY THE PODIATRY MANAGEMENT EDITORIAL STAFF

“Every patient I see gets a conversation about biomechanics,” says Nadia Sadeghi, DPM, owner of Fox Valley Foot and Ankle Specialists in Naperville, IL. “Even if they come in for heel pain or an ankle sprain, I take the time to explain how their gait, arch structure, or alignment might be contributing. Custom orthotics aren’t just inserts. They’re a long-term solution that helps stabilize, correct, and prevent issues from getting worse.”

Dr. Sadeghi purchased her practice in July 2021 and implemented the Practice Builder system from Podiatry Content Connection (PCC), a marketing firm specializing in podiatry practices, just two months later. “I wanted to grow my business and boost revenue,” she explains. “Practice Builder gave me the online visibility and patient flow I needed.” When Dr. Sadeghi then wanted to focus on custom orthotics, she added PCC’s Sole Marketing System, which was designed to help podiatrists increase revenue from custom orthotics. “Then everything really accelerated,” she adds. Since then, Dr. Sadeghi has opened a second location in Chicago and continues to expand her patient base.

“Podiatry Content Connection brings new patients into my practice through a combination of blogs, search engine optimization [SEO],

directory optimization, Google Ads, and email marketing,” says Dr. Sadeghi. “When someone searches for things like ‘foot pain,’ ‘orthotics,’ or ‘podiatrist near me,’ my practice

foot and ankle as well as possible to help a patient’s current issue and prevent future issues. I prescribe about 40 orthotics a month. I don’t sell orthotics. I educate, illustrate, and ex-

“I don’t sell orthotics. I educate, illustrate and explain the purpose of them, almost like an investment, so they end up selling themselves.”—Amin

shows up at the top. That visibility gives me the opportunity to educate patients on biomechanics and explain how custom orthotics can help.”

“Every new patient gets my discussion of the biomechanics of the foot and ankle that goes beyond just what they came in for,” says Kunal Amin, DPM, who owns Cypress Foot & Ankle Center and Fulshear Foot and Ankle, both in Texas. “Surgery is



Dr. Amin

part of my first discussion with a patient for something that is torn or broken and elective issues, but I try to take a conservative approach to treating the foot and ankle when possible. I always tie biomechanics into custom orthotics and the concept of trying to control the

plain the purpose of them, almost like an investment, so they end up selling themselves.”

In September 2024, Dr. Amin began working with Blue Orchid Marketing to help grow his Cypress practice, which he opened in 2022. “Blue Orchid is bringing new patients into my practice via online marketing, and it’s my job to tie their problems in with how custom orthotics can help,” Dr. Amin says. “If someone looks up ‘podiatrist near me’ or ‘bunions’ or ‘orthotics,’ my practice pops up on top of the first page due to strong SEO.”

“Every podiatrist, whether they’re just starting out or have been practicing for years, could benefit from re-examining when and how often they prescribe custom orthotics,” says Cindy Sorenti (formerly Pezza), president and CEO of Pin-

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nacle Practice Achievement, a consulting firm for podiatrists and their team members.



Dr. Sorenti

“First and foremost, custom orthotics can improve a patient’s quality of life, and helping patients is why podiatrists went into practice. Second, surgery

doesn’t pay what it used to, and you’re out of the office for a few hours or longer for one case. During that time, you could have treated eight patients. In addition, podiatrists are tied to surgical patients for 90 days, and there’s no pay for those visits. Absolutely, there is a need for surgery, but in many cases, it shouldn’t be the first option, especially when conservative treatment, including a custom orthotic, might address or alleviate the underlying problem. Best of all, patients leave feeling better.”

Treatment Protocols

“If you always do what’s good for the patient, you will be successful,”

says Misty McNeill, DPM, who works at Weil Foot & Ankle in Oak Brook, IL. “Custom orthotics make patients happy. It is a conservative approach to treating a problem and can help patients



Dr. McNeill

who are not ready for surgery. I really think patients appreciate an option before surgery, even if it will only help delay the surgery or decrease their symptoms while deciding if they are ready for surgery. People want to get back to their activities as quickly as they can. Happy patients return and send other patients. You want to make patients better, and you must be financially secure. Custom orthotics accomplish both.” She says her experience more than 22 years ago was that residency training was more focused on surgery than on how to prescribe good orthotics, noting that

“I had to learn how to fit custom orthotics on my own.”

“There shouldn’t be a separation between biomechanics and surgery,” says Jarrod Shapiro, DPM, associate professor at Western University of Health Sciences College of Podiatric Medicine in Pomona, CA, and medical director of WesternU Health Pomona Foot and Ankle Center. “Some patients need surgery, some need orthotics, and some need both. Yet, these two approaches are taught separately in school. Among the applicants to our residency programs,



Dr. Shapiro

trained as well. My nurse can handle all patient questions and concerns regarding shoe gear fit and financial investment. When a patient opts not to get the orthotics, I feel we haven’t done our job in communicating how beneficial they are and why they need them.”

Sorenti says that grow your custom orthotics practice, you need to believe they work. “It helps if podiatrists and staff members wear them. That way, everyone can answer questions, such as whether they really work and how long is the break-in time. Doctors are not natural salespeople. Work on your delivery and prepare answers to common questions. But don’t be a used car salesperson. If a patient isn’t ready to order custom orthotics, leave it there.

“If you always do what’s good for the patient, you will be successful.”—McNeill

there is an almost universal weakness in biomechanical thought process.

“In residency programs, only 75 patient biomechanical examinations are required,” Dr Shapiro continues. “So, residents don’t have a strong understanding of biomechanics when they begin practicing. But the reality is that most podiatrists do most of their work in the non-surgical realm, so to have a successful career, it’s essential to understand the benefits of custom orthotics. I don’t have an orthotic practice or surgical practice. I just have a practice that can help to safely solve a patient’s complaint, which includes custom orthotics, medication, and surgery. There are few written resources for students to learn about biomechanics, so it’s up to our community to educate students.”

Informed Patients

“I explain to patients what biomechanics of their foot are contributing to their problem,” Dr. McNeill says. “Then I tell them how an orthotic can help fix or control that. I think patients are very informed consumers, and they want to understand why they need something. It’s important to have your staff properly

When the patient comes back and is still in pain, discuss again how orthotics can help.”

“Today, it is more important than ever for podiatrists to educate their patients about custom orthotics, because they face competition from retail stores that market orthotics, as well as from other healthcare practitioners who prescribe orthotics, including physical therapists, pedorthists, and chiropractors,” says Jason Kraus, co-founder of Orthotica Labs. “People see advertisements for ‘foot’ orthotics, but they don’t understand that they’re not getting the same product as a custom orthotic. Many podiatrists say they see patients who did not find relief from retail orthotics. Podiatrists must walk the tricky line between telling them that they may have been misled, or worse, ripped off, and the fact that they still need a properly prescribed and functional pair of foot orthotics.”



Jason Kraus

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Money Matters

“Podiatrists often worry that their patients can’t afford custom orthotics,” Sorenti says. “Make a medical recommendation based on what a patient needs. Let staff members be the bad guys, to tell patients what they’ll cost if they’re not covered under insurance. Some patients may hesitate, but they often come back.”

“Podiatrists want to make a living,” Dr. Shapiro says. “In general, a podiatrist will bring in more income from seeing more patients than from doing surgery. Custom orthotics tend to be a relatively profitable part of the practice.”

“I explain to patients that custom orthotics are an investment in their health,” Dr. McNeill says. “I ask, ‘What activity are you looking to get back to, and what is that worth to you?’ A quality over-the-counter de-

of orthotics are perfect the first time, 10 percent of the time they need adjustments, and almost no orthotics require a remake.”

Kraus says that podiatrists should resist the temptation to work with suppliers that offer lower-cost orthotics. “You pay a higher price for

and inactive patients to their practice. It’s important to note the importance of a well-constructed website when running paid ads as well. A Google Ads campaign for custom orthotics, for example, is a waste of money unless it’s linked to a specific landing page on the podiatrist’s web-

“Patient education emails focus on foot pain, back pain, and other issues that could be corrected with custom orthotics.”—Hartman

“With the right marketing efforts, podiatrists can attract condition-specific new and inactive patients to their practice.”—Zaken

vice costs \$60 to \$75 and lasts 3 to 4 months for an active person, whereas a custom device will last 2 to 4 years. A colleague of mine tells them it’s cheaper than their Netflix subscription.” Dr. McNeill says she stopped doing surgery a few years ago. Orthotics are the mainstay of her practice and account for approximately 50 percent of her revenue.

“Consider that a patient without insurance pays \$700 for custom orthotics and a podiatrist may be paid \$800 for bunion or hammertoe surgery,” Dr. McNeill continues. “The surgery may take two hours plus 90 days of follow-up with no payment. Plus, there’s a risk with surgery. There are minimal risks with orthotics. The biggest risk is that the patient doesn’t like them. In 22 years of practice, I’ve given people their money back a handful of times, and I remember every single one, because it’s that infrequent. With improvements in digital scanning, 90 percent

a better product that likely includes innovations that improve fit and functionality. Seek suppliers who still conform to the evidenced-based approach to orthotics and who continue to incorporate good manufacturing practices. Your fundamental belief in their therapeutic value will

site that explains conditions that can be helped with orthotics.

“Podiatrists should also be proactive when it comes to understanding where their marketing dollars are going, what services they are paying for, and what their return on investment [ROI] looks like,” Zaken continues. “We provide a monthly performance report to clients that details their ROI for anything that is revenue generating, such as Google Ads or patient recall campaigns. Social media is not a direct revenue-generating service. However, it offers another opportunity for DPMs to connect with their community on a more personal level.” Zaken suggests that podiatrists considering hiring a marketing agency ask to see samples of each agency’s work.



Jeffrey Hartman

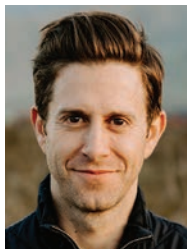
In 2024, PCC introduced its custom orthotics-focused Sole Marketing System, the system in use in Dr. Sadeghi’s practice. “Podiatrists have to have consistent revenue, and custom orthotics help patients and provide that consistent revenue,” says Jeffrey Hartman, PCC’s founder and CEO. “The key goal of the Sole Marketing System is to connect with existing patients and remind them to make an appointment to see if their orthotics are still working or if they’ve worn out and need to be replaced. For some patients, their biomechanics change, and they need new orthotics.

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be conveyed to your patients and return valuable dividends to you both.”

Be Proactive

“To support our custom orthotics practice, we follow up annually with phone calls, emails, and reminder postcards,” Dr. McNeill says. “Many of our patients come back to get a



Shaun Zaken

new pair for different shoes or because the orthotic is worn down. I offer patients a discount for additional pairs.”

“Podiatrists should not have to wait for patients seeking custom orthotics to walk through their door,” says Shaun Zaken, CEO of Blue Orchid Marketing. “With the right marketing efforts, podiatrists can attract condition-specific new



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Podiatrists have to see a certain number of patients each day to meet their overhead and run a profitable business. That means, they have limited

PCC also provides educational posters for offices that help podiatrists and their staff start conversations about custom orthotics.

“There are several benefits to working with a marketing firm to

Today, AI-generated agents can analyze data to know what works and what doesn’t with marketing campaigns. Placing an AI chatbot on a podiatrist’s website can connect with visitors by answering their questions, which turns the visitor into a patient. Currently, in our AI lab, we are working on a system to generate patient education videos in a doctor’s likeness. A podiatrist’s website can feature a video with the likeness and speech of the doctor, identified as an AI-generated image, further helping to convert website visitors into new patients.”

Finally, keep track of referring providers, Sorenti says. “You might find that primary care doctors only refer diabetic patients or those with ingrown toenails,” she says. “So, you need to educate them on other conditions you can treat. And don’t overlook the value of making custom orthotics for a referring provider. That’s like gold.” PM

Don’t overlook the value of making custom orthotics for a referring provider. That’s like gold.”—Sorenti

time with the patient, often to treat the immediate problem, and don’t have time to discuss biometrics and custom orthotics.

“Patient education emails focus on foot pain, back pain, and other issues that could be corrected with custom orthotics,” Hartman continues. “These emails link to articles on the podiatrist’s website and blogs that distribute content to Facebook.”

get recurring revenue from custom orthotics,” Hartman says. “Most podiatrists don’t have the time to write blogs to promote custom orthotics. Some practices hire an in-house marketing person, which is expensive, and one person can’t cover all aspects of marketing. Additionally, a marketing firm can leverage technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence [AI].