Transforming Podiatric Practice with Artificial Intelligence

As AI grows, its impact is felt in multiple areas of practice workflow.

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the healthcare landscape, and podiatry is no exception. The availability of AI to the general public, such as ChatGPT, has increased the awareness of AI and its potential capabilities in medicine. A study published in *PLoS Digital Health* evaluated ChatGPT's performance of the three exams associated with the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE). The study found that ChatGPT, especially later models like GPT-4, achieved accuracy levels comparable to or exceeding the 60% passing mark for the USMLE!

As our practices face increasing administrative burdens, higher patient expectations, and the need for precise clinical decision-making, AI has emerged as a powerful tool that enhances efficiency, accuracy, and patient satisfaction. The integration of AI into podiatric medicine is not just a possibility, but it is rapidly becoming an essential part of modern practice management and clinical care. By automating routine tasks, improving diagnostic accuracy, optimizing billing processes, and improving patient experiences, AI enables you to work smarter and focus more time on direct patient care.

Let's look at the typical workflow of a podiatry practice (in the order of patient experience) to appreciate where AI can assist…

Marketing

AI's impact begins with its ability to assist in marketing your practice for patients. Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly powerful tool in marketing for podiatry practices, helping reach the right patients more efficiently while maintaining a professional and educational presence. AI-driven marketing platforms can analyze your local demographics and search behavior and patient interests to tailor messaging that speaks directly to common podiatric concerns such as heel pain, diabetic foot care, sports injuries, and nail conditions. This allows you to focus your outreach on patients who are most likely to need podiatric services, improving both visibility and return on marketing investment.

AI also plays a key role in enhancing your digital presence. Tools powered by AI can optimize your website content for search engines, ensuring that your practice appears prominently when patients search for foot and ankle care in their area. Chatbots and virtual assistants can respond to common questions, assist with appointment scheduling, and provide basic educational information around the clock, creating a more accessible and patient-friendly experience without increasing your staff's workload.

By analyzing the marketing plan's performance, patient engagement, and referral patterns, AI can identify which messages, platforms, and services are most meaningful to your prospective patients. This allows you to refine your marketing strategies over time and allocate budgets more effectively.

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However, one of the most exciting features of AI in podiatry lies in patient engagement. Today's patients expect more communication, convenience, and responsiveness from their healthcare providers. AI-powered patient engagement platforms help your practice meet these expectations through automated appointment reminders, personalized follow-up messages, and "check-ins" that keep patients connected to their treatment plan. Patients recovering from procedures or managing chronic conditions such as plantar fasciitis or diabetic neuropathy can receive AI-generated educational content tailored to their specific needs. This ensures that your

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patients remain actively engaged in their care, improving adherence and clinical outcomes.

Virtual assistants powered by AI also help reduce call volume by answering common patient questions, addressing concerns, and facilitating scheduling. If your practice experiences heavy volume, AI-supported communication tools greatly enhance the patient experience while reducing staff burnout.

AI is also improving patient satisfaction by offering more convenient experiences. Practices that utilize AI for online scheduling, digital check-in, and automated intake forms report fewer bottlenecks at the front desk and faster appointment turnover. By minimizing wait times and streamlining administrative interactions, you can create a more efficient and pleasant environment.

reduces the time required to complete documentation. Many podiatrists find that AI cuts charting time by more than half, freeing up hours each week that can be redirected toward patient care or practice growth. AI systems also reduce the risk of

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incomplete or inconsistent documentation, ensuring that charts accurately reflect the complexity of services provided, such as the proper E/M level.

Billing

Billing is another area where AI dramatically improves efficiency and accuracy. Podiatry billing is uniquely

Beyond coding, AI can streamline the revenue cycle by predicting payer behavior and identifying claims likely to encounter issues. This level of insight allows your billing team to proactively address potential problems. Over time, AI's predictive capa-

bilities can help you refine your billing strategies, improve cash flow, and reduce administrative workload. AI also assists with eligibility verification, pre-authorization tracking, and financial communication with patients, simplifying the entire billing process.

What About Patient Care?

AI-driven imaging tools can evaluate foot and ankle radiographs to identify fractures, deformities, or degenerative changes with remarkable accuracy. These diagnostic enhancements support a more timely and accurate treatment plan. If you frequently manage complex conditions such as diabetic ulcers, AI algorithms can evaluate wound photographs, predict healing timelines, and suggest evidence-based interventions.

Another significant benefit is the way AI can help support preventive care. By analyzing your electronic health record, wearable device data, and patient history, AI can identify patients at risk for complications such as diabetic foot ulcers or falls. This predictive approach enables earlier intervention, reducing the likelihood of severe outcomes and lowering long-term healthcare costs.

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Documentation

Documentation is one of the biggest "time vampires" for podiatric physicians, who must consistently chart on time, document procedures, and ensure compliance with the ever-escalating regulatory requirements. AI-driven "charting scribes" now allow you to document visits in real time using voice recognition and natural language processing. These systems can listen to the clinical encounter and generate structured notes that align with podiatry-specific workflows, including examination findings, biomechanical assessments, and procedural documentation such as debridement codes or treatment of nail disorders. Unlike traditional dictation tools, AI charting platforms understand medical terminology, anatomical references, and context, allowing them to produce highly accurate, ready-to-sign clinical notes.

AI-driven charting significantly

complex due to the variety of procedures performed, the nuances of evaluation and management codes, and the specific documentation requirements associated with nail care, diabetic foot examinations, wound care, and orthotic management. AI-powered billing tools analyze clinical documentation and automatically suggest appropriate CPT, ICD-10, and modifier combinations. These systems can also flag missing documentation, identify potential coding errors, and detect patterns that may lead to audits or denials.

Billing errors contribute to delayed payments or reduced reimbursements, and AI creates a new level of precision. By cross-referencing the chart, payer guidelines, and coding rules, AI helps ensure that your claims are submitted "cleanly" the first time. This reduces denial rates, speeds up reimbursement, and strengthens the financial health of your practice.

AI and Your Financial Statements and Planning

AI can significantly improve how you manage and understand your profit and loss (P&L) statements and balance sheets by automating routine financial tasks and turning raw numbers into action plans. Instead of relying solely on manual bookkeeping or quarterly reviews, AI-powered

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accounting tools can automatically categorize expenses (such as medical supplies, staff payroll, rent, and equipment leases), reconcile transactions, and generate up-to-date P&L statements. This gives practice owners a near real-time view of revenue, overhead, and net profit, making it easier to spot trends like rising supply costs or seasonal dips in patient volume.

When it comes to balance sheets, AI helps maintain accuracy and clarity by continuously tracking assets, liabilities, and equity. For a podiatry practice, this may include monitoring the value of medical equipment, lease obligations, lines of credit, and accounts receivable from payers. And beyond basic reporting, AI can assist in analyzing historical data and forecasting future performance. For example, AI can model how adding a new provider, opening an additional location, or purchasing new diagnostic equipment might affect cash flow, profitability, and the balance sheet over time.

What About the Risks of AI?

As AI becomes more integrated into medicine, it's important to acknowledge the challenges and responsibilities associated with its implementation. Maintaining patient privacy, ensuring data security, and validating the accuracy of AI-generated recommendations are essential considerations for any practice adopting these tools. You must also remain aware of the limitations of AI and not passively rely on its clinical judgment. While AI can analyze vast amounts of data and identify patterns, it cannot replace the hands-on skill, experience, empathy, and interpersonal connection that define podiatric medicine.

Nevertheless, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. As technology advances, AI will continue to enhance the podiatric workflow by reducing administrative burdens, supporting diagnostic decision-making, strength-ening patient engagement, and improving financial performance. Practices that adopt AI early will be better positioned to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving healthcare system and patient population. AI is not just reshaping the future of podiatry… it's redefining what is possible in a modern podiatry practice. **PM**

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