

Meet APMA President Patrick DeHeer, DPM

In our sit-down with Dr. DeHeer, he reflected on leadership, purpose, and the future of podiatric medicine.

At the 2026 APMA House of Delegates meeting in Washington, DC, Patrick DeHeer, DPM, was installed as the 100th president of the American Podiatric Medical Association. A surgeon, educator, mentor, and global humanitarian, Dr. DeHeer brings decades of experience—and a deeply rooted sense of purpose—to the role.

In the APMA president's traditional conversation with *Podiatry Management*®, he offered us numerous insights on his journey, leadership philosophy, and vision for the profession's future.

Podiatry Management: *Tell us about your background and life outside of medicine.*

Dr. DeHeer: I grew up in Indianapolis and stayed closely connected to the community throughout my career. I attended Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine before returning to Indianapolis for my residency at Winona Memorial Hospital.

My wife Erika and I have a large, blended family—six children and six grandchildren. Family is central to everything I do.

Outside of medicine, I enjoy pickleball, cooking, traveling, and spending time at our lake house in northern Indiana. Music is also a big part of my life. I'm a longtime Grateful Dead fan, and that energy and



Dr. DeHeer

creativity carry into how I approach leadership and teamwork.

PM: *What led you to choose podiatric medicine?*

Dr. DeHeer: I didn't start out planning to be a podiatrist. But after shadowing a DPM, I saw something powerful—patients walking in with pain and leaving feeling better immediately. That ability to directly improve someone's life in a tangible way really resonated with me. Over time, I came to understand that podiatric medicine isn't just a career—it's a calling ground-

ed in service, purpose, and human dignity.

PM: *At your installation, you shared a story about a patient in Haiti who changed your perspective. Would you share that story with our readers?*

Dr. DeHeer: Absolutely. In 2003, I met a young boy named Wilkin in Haiti who had severe, untreated clubfoot deformities. After surgery in Haiti, he developed a serious infection and was facing amputation.

We had about two weeks to act. Through an incredible effort involving multiple people and organizations, we brought him to the U.S., treated him, and ultimately saved his leg. He went on to walk, grow, and thrive.

That experience fundamentally changed me. It reinforced that our profession has the power not just to treat—but to transform lives. And it showed me what leadership looks like when the stakes are highest.

PM: *How has mentorship shaped your career?*

Dr. DeHeer: My mentor, Dr. Richard Lundeen, had a profound impact on my development. His guidance shaped not only my surgical skills, but also how I approach teaching and leadership.

As a residency director, I'm passionate about education. Teaching

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is how we carry forward the legacy of those who taught us and ensure the profession continues to grow stronger. We have super smart residents, young physicians, and students coming through. I learn a lot from them as well, and they energize me. Teaching young podiatrists has shown me the profession is in good hands.

ment of the APMA Research Committee. Why are data and research so important?

Dr. DeHeer: Because data defines credibility. We know the outcomes we deliver are exceptional, but in today's healthcare environment, we have to prove it. Data allows us to demonstrate our value, strengthen advocacy, and shape policy. If we want to lead in healthcare, we have

I've been heavily involved in this area. I chaired the task force that became the Foundation for Podiatric Education, which hired JPA Health to create a professional, research-driven marketing campaign. Early results were very promising, but sustained funding is critical. The data clearly shows that podiatry has a marketing and awareness problem.

That's why initiatives like improved data transparency (our compensation survey through our partnership with Marit Health is a great example) and coordinated messaging are so important. We need a unified voice that clearly communicates the value of this profession.

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PM: What is your leadership philosophy?

Dr. DeHeer: I believe in leading from the front—what I call “leading in the arena.” That means showing up, taking responsibility, and making decisions even when conditions aren't perfect.

Leadership isn't about comfort; it's about courage, discipline, and service. It's about being willing to act, even when the outcome isn't guaranteed. I also believe in surrounding yourself with people who challenge you. Diverse perspectives make better decisions and stronger organizations.

PM: What challenges does the profession face today?

Dr. DeHeer: We have to be honest with ourselves; there are real challenges:

- Misunderstanding of our training and expertise
- Barriers within health systems
- A shrinking workforce
- Student recruitment issues
- Fragmentation within the profession

But this is not new territory for us. Podiatry has always earned what it has accomplished. We've never been the profession of privilege—we've been the profession of perseverance.

PM: You were a long-time propo-

to speak with evidence—clearly and consistently.

PM: What is your vision for the future of podiatric medicine?

Dr. DeHeer: I see a future where podiatry is a first-choice career, not a backup option. I want our outcomes and value to be wide-

PM: How important is unity within the profession?

Dr. DeHeer: It's essential. We cannot move forward effectively if we're fragmented. Collaboration—within podiatry and with other medical specialties—is key to shaping our future. We need alignment, shared purpose, and a willingness

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ly recognized and understood. I want APMA to continue to become more modern, strategic, and influential, with a seat at every table where healthcare decisions are made. This next century is about moving from defending our value to defining it.

PM: You mentioned that student recruitment is a major concern. What needs to change?

Dr. DeHeer: The issue isn't talent, it's awareness. When prospective students understand the opportunity, outcomes, and earning potential in podiatry, they choose it.

to work together toward long-term goals.

PM: What message do you have for APMA members?

Dr. DeHeer: Be engaged. Be involved. Be invested.

This profession only moves forward if its members actively participate, whether through mentorship, advocacy, education, or leadership. We all have a responsibility to the next generation. Someone helped us get here. Now it's our turn to do the same. This is our moment, and together, we're going to build something extraordinary. **PM**