

FPMA FOOTPRINTS

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Student Recruitment Is Something We All Need to Participate In

By Dr. Liana Seldin, Co-Chair, FPMA Public Affairs Committee

Podiatric medicine is an integral part of our healthcare system. Just ask any patient whose nonhealing wounds were healed by a podiatrist. Or a patient who sustained a Lisfranc injury missed during a trip to the emergency room. Or a patient whose heel pain finally got resolved under the care of a podiatrist.

I know I am preaching to the choir. But what more can we do to educate the public, especially studious, honor roll-winning young adults applying to graduate programs?

According to the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (AACPM), approximately 1,000 applicants seek acceptance into podiatric medical schools each year. In the fall of 2024, 573 first-year students entered into study. In contrast, 55,188 applications were submitted for allopathic medical schools for the entering class of 2022-2023.

Let's face it — podiatric medical schools face challenges attracting sufficient numbers of applicants. Many young people are completely unaware of our profession because it is not in the standard of care to have a routine podiatric exam if no indications of pathology exist. In contrast, every healthy child needs an annual physical by a pediatrician and routine dental care by a dentist twice a year.

Odds are that an undergrad who has never suffered a significant foot or ankle injury, an infected, ingrown toenail or an incaltrant plantar wart may never have crossed paths with a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine.

The issue of student recruitment in the podiatric field is not a new one. But despite many efforts made over the years, we have not effectively cracked the code on enhancing public awareness of our profession.

Student recruitment efforts are worth pursuing. Many of the fourth-year podiatric medical students who rotate through my office tell me it was a podiatrist who treated their injury, or a podiatrist scribing experience, that motivated them to pursue podiatric medicine.

Essentially, the biggest impact we as podiatric physicians can make is on a personal level:

- If you have children, volunteer for Career Day at their school. You may very well make a lifelong impression from just

one presentation. As a bonus, it is a great marketing tool for your practice (teachers and school staff members have feet, too).

- Become involved in your alumni associations at the high school and undergraduate levels to highlight your success stories. Speaking to prehealth students at your alma mater could make a significant impression.
- Prehealth students love suturing workshops! Put one together and experience the enthusiasm.
- Providing a lecture concerning podiatry could encourage the formation of prepodiatry clubs on college campuses, thus creating a community of students interested in the field. These clubs can offer networking opportunities, provide resources and host events that promote podiatry.
- There is no better way to encourage someone to become a podiatrist than having a potential applicant visit your practice and shadow you. Experiencing the impact we make on our patients firsthand is exciting.

To get started, sign up for the APMA Mentor Network. You can now opt in through your APMA account profile on www.apma.org, making the process easier than ever:

1. Log in to www.apma.org
2. Click “My Account” at the top of the screen
3. Click “Update Contact and Mentor Info”
4. Scroll down and select the box next to “Become a Podiatry Mentor”
5. Click “Save”

To make the process even easier, both the FPMA and APMA websites have customizable PowerPoint presentations and handouts available for your use.

All of us need to get involved in student recruitment, as this is the key to sustaining the progress of our profession, respect of our physician colleagues, and quality of the work we do. The key to doing this is to continue attracting

smart, motivated and caring future student doctors to our profession.

Get started today by visiting the FPMA website’s DPM Mentors/Student Recruitment page at www.fpma.com/dpm_mentors_student_recruitmen.php.

Dr. Liana Seldin participated in the Minority Women in Medicine Pre-Health Summit at the University of Miami on April 14, 2024. A suture workshop was provided for Summit attendees.

