

The best comprehensive sources of information on podiatric medical school admission and on podiatry as a career are found on the Web sites of the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (www.aacpm.org) and of the American Podiatric Medical Association (<http://www.apma.org/>). Additional information about podiatric education can also be found in the Career Services Center's Professional and Graduate School Advising Program library, including podiatric medical school catalogs, as well as on the CSC website at <http://career.ucsd.edu>

WHAT PODIATRISTS DO

Podiatric medicine is a branch of the medical sciences devoted to the study of human movement and the medical care of the foot and ankle. A Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM) specializes in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of foot disorders resulting from injury, disease or aging. A podiatrist makes independent judgments, prescribes medications and, when necessary, performs surgery. Since the human foot is interrelated with the rest of the body in a complex fashion, it may be the first area to show signs of serious conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. As the podiatric physician is often the first to detect symptoms of these disorders, they are a vital, sometimes lifesaving, link in the health care team.

PODIATRIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The educational program leading to the DPM is four years in length, similar to allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO) medical programs. At least two years of post-graduate training is required for licensure in most states. Podiatric medical residencies are conducted in accredited hospital centers in which MDs and DOs also may be training. This provides interdisciplinary experience on medical rotations such as anesthesiology, internal medicine, radiology, surgery, orthopedics, emergency room medicine and pediatrics. The length of residency ranges from two to four years depending upon the area of specialty and the residency program. Certification is available in orthopedics and primary medicine or surgery.

ADMISSION SELECTION FACTORS

Admissions committees are concerned with the applicant's potential for academic success in the first two years of podiatric medical school. Undergraduate grades and standardized test scores are important predictors of performance. Nationwide, the GPA mean for admitted students is typically 3.3 for all college work, with many UCSD students admitted with GPAs around 3.0. The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) national mean is typically 22. Many schools also accept Dental Admission Test (DAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) science scores in lieu of the MCAT. There are 9 podiatric medical colleges in the U.S. The California School of Podiatric Medicine (CSPM) at Samuel Merritt College in Oakland, the Arizona Podiatric Medicine Program (AZPod) at Midwestern University in Glendale, and the new College of Podiatric Medicine at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona are the only schools in the Western U.S. In recent years several UCSD students have applied to CSPM, were accepted and are now attending. Nationwide the acceptance rate is typically 80%. Students are encouraged to contact podiatry schools directly for detailed information. School addresses and phone numbers are available through www.aacpm.org.

ACADEMIC AND OTHER PREPARATION

Podiatric medical colleges require that applicants complete at least three years (about 135 quarter units) of undergraduate study, and a bachelor's degree (in any major) is strongly recommended (about 95% of entrants have a bachelor's degree). Specific courses required by podiatric colleges include: one year of biology with lab (including **BILD 1 and 2** or their equivalent); one year or general chemistry with lab (**Chem 6ABC and 7L**); one year of organic chemistry with lab (**Chem 140ABC and 143A**); one year of physics with lab (**Physics 1ABC or 2ABC w labs**); 9 quarter units of English (typically the UCSD college writing requirement); and 18 quarter units of other liberal arts courses. Podiatric schools typically allow applicants to fulfill these course requirements in a variety of ways, including AP credit and community college coursework. Refer to podiatric school catalogs and online resources, as well as contact with schools, to determine how to fulfill specific course requirements.

It is also important to have some opportunity to observe podiatrists in action, to have a full understanding of what they do and where they work, and for career choice confirmation. For a list of podiatric physician and podiatric student mentors visit: <http://www.aacpm.org/contactpod/default.asp>. Also, community service and volunteering in health or other settings where people are in need is strongly recommended for all applicants. Such experience helps to develop interpersonal skills and demonstrates a desire to be of service to others.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

In September of each year the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine Application Service (AACPMAS) begins to process applications for admission the following year to the 9 U.S. colleges of podiatric medicine. The AACPMAS application can be found at www.aacpm.org and can be submitted online. The deadline for applications is July 31st for Fall entrance in the same year, but priority is given to applications received before April 1 of that year. Official transcripts from all post-secondary schools must be received by each podiatric college. Typically, 2 - 3 letters of reference from science faculty and one from a podiatrist must also be submitted. Podiatric schools also interview applicants prior to admission decisions.

PODIATRIC PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Upon completion of their formal education, the majority of podiatrists enter private practice, although opportunities exist in hospital, health center, public health and group practice settings, as well as on the faculty of health professions schools. Podiatrists may stress any or all of the following in their practices: general podiatric medicine, podopediatrics, podogeriatrics, podiatric surgery, orthopedics/bio-mechanics or podiatric sports medicine. Demand for podiatrists is expected to grow as many podiatrists retire. The trend toward physical fitness and active lifestyles, and the fast growing geriatric population, will maintain the need for this type of medical service. The current ratio of podiatric physicians to the general population approaches one to 25,000. Most podiatrists are self-employed as solo practitioners. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association the average annual net income for podiatrists is \$150,000. The average work week varies from less than 40 hours to 50 hours, with few emergencies.

RESOURCES

The UCSD Career Services Center offers the following services for all pre-professional students:

- ❑ Individual advising.
- ❑ Group information sessions on preparing for medical school, the application process and selecting schools, writing the personal statement, and interviewing for professional school.
- ❑ Professional and graduate school catalogs/brochures.
- ❑ Application essay (personal statement) critique.
- ❑ Informational handouts on topics including interviewing, application essays, tips on getting reference letters, the MCAT, etc.
- ❑ Panel presentations featuring medical professionals.
- ❑ The Graduate and Professional School Fair held each fall and the Health Professions School Fair held each spring featuring school representatives.

For a list of programs and events, pick up the [Career Services Quarterly Calendar](#) in Career Services or visit the website career.ucsd.edu.