

Florida Medical Association FACT SHEET



PODIATRIC SCOPE OF PRACTICE

HB by

SB by

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FMA Position

According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, “Podiatry is a field of medicine that strives to improve the overall health and well-being of patients by focusing on preventing, diagnosing, and treating conditions associated with the foot and ankle.” The FMA strongly believes that the state statutes need to be clarified to ensure that podiatrists limit all treatments to the foot and ankle, therefore adhering to the professional training and standards established by the American Podiatric Medical Association.

Background

Current Florida law (Section 461.003(5), Florida Statutes) provides that the practice of podiatric medicine means the diagnosis or medical, surgical, palliative, and mechanical treatment of ailments of the human foot and leg. The statute states that surgical treatment of ailments of the human foot and leg are limited anatomically to that part below the anterior tibial tubercle (the knee). The Florida Orthopedic Society and Florida Medical Association have documented cases of podiatrists doing the following: performing lateral releases behind the knee; performing injections of the knee joints; ordering costly and unnecessary diagnostic tests of the knee; and taking weekend courses in how to incorporate all of the above into their practices. These practices endanger the safety of Floridians who may be unaware that these tests and procedures are being performed by professionals who lack adequate training.

Discussion

The proposed legislation seeks to conform current state statutes to the anatomical training and expertise of podiatrists. The American Board of Podiatric Surgery does not have a certification program or qualification for any treatments other than Foot Surgery and Foot and Reconstructive Rearfoot/Ankle Surgery. Only four states currently include the term “leg” in the definition of the practice of podiatry. A majority of states do not include leg in the definition, strictly limiting the practice to the foot and ankle. According to the report entitled, “Comprehensive Foot Care – The Report of the National Commission on Podiatric Medicine” prepared by the American Podiatric Medical Association, “The Commission believes that a uniform definition of scope of practice is overdue, and it recommends an anatomical scope that includes the foot, ankle, and soft tissue of the lower leg to the tibial tuberosity.”

Conclusion

Patients throughout Florida are unknowingly being subjected to treatment and procedures performed by untrained professionals. According to Florida law (Section 461.001, Florida Statutes), the sole legislative purpose for enacting Chapter 461 was to ensure that every podiatric physician practicing in this state meets minimum requirements for safe practice.