

A Pod C Elects New President

Podiatrist Carol Mioduchowski is the new president of the Australasian Podiatry Council, succeeding the president of two years, Kevan Wright.

"I am very pleased to be able to represent this profession as the president of the APodC. I hope to contribute to the great work that is already occurring at the Australasian Podiatry Council and at the member associations. I have been in practice for nearly 10 years and I am constantly amazed by the positive impact our work as podiatrists has on people's lives, and how little the importance of this impact is recognised," Ms Mioduchowski said.

In 1993, Ms Mioduchowski began her career in podiatry after completing a science degree and a subsequent degree in podiatry because 'the thought of spending my working time looking down a microscope or, even worse, looking at bodily excretions in a medical pathology lab was not my idea of autonomous fun.' And since then she has practiced as a podiatrist, while also contributing to the development of the podiatry profession through her involvement with the APodC and the Australian Podiatry Association (Victoria) including a stint as Association president.

"I think the next 12 months will be very challenging for us – there are many issues which need to be addressed such as the need to further consolidate insurance issues and work with compensable bodies to increase client rebates," she said.

Ms Mioduchowski brings both clinical and managerial experience to her role as president. She is currently employed at Barwon Health, where she is chief podiatrist and she co-manages a multidisciplinary primary care program, which provides services to Geelong and surrounding areas.



Carol Mioduchowski

"I have seen the profile of, and the respect for the profession grow enormously in the last 10 years. But we still have our work cut out for us. We need to emphasize to the community and to government that podiatrists play a vital role in keeping people healthy, and that without them we would see a huge increase in lower limb problems, which would have significant economic, social, and health costs," Ms Mioduchowski said.

Council Better for Wright Approach

Council CEO John Price said, "In his time as president, Kevan Wright made a significant contribution to the APodC. In particular, he was able to bring representatives from all seven member associations together and managed to get everyone to work harmoniously on a number of key projects, which is no small feat."

On behalf of the members and member associations, the Council would like to thank Kevan Wright for his leadership over the past two years.

Federal Govt. Agrees to 7.8% Increase for 2003 & New Fee Formula

Following extensive negotiations with the Department of Veterans' Affairs over the last two years, the Australasian Podiatry Council finally gained Federal Government agreement to a more satisfactory fee formula for adjusting podiatry fees from the 1st of January each year.

John Price, CEO of the Council, said that "the new fee index is part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) series, and is a specialist CPI sub index called the 'Health Services Sub-Index'. This index is a more appropriate measure of movements in costs related to running a private practice such as commercial rather than residential rent, staff salaries, motor vehicle, and equipment. This index is also used for other practitioners with similar practice costs such as dentists.

"In addition to the special increases applied from 1st July 2002, the Federal Government's application of this new formula has resulted in an increase of 7.8% from the 1st January 2003. This is a pleasing outcome to the Council's negotiations and means that, in 2002-3 the total increases from these fee adjustments will range from 17.3% to 20.3%."

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APERF Grant Leads to PhD and More Research

Rolf Scharfbillig, a PhD student at the University of South Australia, lecturer and tutor at the University of South Australia, and a podiatrist in private practice, received APERF support for his study on the Foot Posture Index.

The Foot Posture Index [FPI] is a new multi-dimensional and multi-planar tool aimed at quantifying the degree of pronation to supination of the foot. The FPI is comprised of eight criteria that produce a final 'score' of foot posture.

"The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between four criteria of the FPI and anatomical angles measured by x-ray, in an attempt to validate the FPI. The x-rays were used as measurements, a 'gold standard' to compare the FPI measures against, so that the FPI could be used confidently by researchers and practitioners," Mr Scharfbillig said.

Two studies were undertaken: thirty-one subjects completed a correlation study where angulations measured from dorsoplantar and lateral x-rays were compared to the corresponding FPI criteria. Eleven of the participants from study one completed a second study where wedges were used to alter foot position, to determine whether changes

to foot position were sensitively reflected in FPI criterion scores and associated radiographic images. Study one demonstrated a significant correlation for only one criterion [talar head palpation], while study two demonstrated intra-subject sensitivity to overall changes from supinated to pronated and supinated to resting positions, but an insensitivity to changes between resting and pronated positions. The results suggest that while the FPI could be a useful tool to broadly classify foot postures, it cannot be said to be sensitive to all small movements when assessed via this method.

In the next phase of his research, Mr Scharfbillig will use the FPI to collect data on young people's feet.

"Having validated the tool, I will use it when I compare the feet of adolescents with Sever's disease to the feet of adolescents who are asymptomatic."

The APERF grant provided vital funding for the Foot Posture study, which, in turn, contributed to the success of Mr Scharfbillig's application for an upgrade from masters to PhD. In the longer term, his research into Sever's disease is likely to have clinical applications and in the meantime, podiatrists and researchers can benefit



Researcher Rolf Scharfbillig

from his research through a paper to be published in the prestigious *Journal of the American Podiatric Association*.

The Australian Podiatry Education and Research Foundation (APERF) was established in 1990 to fund research into the causes, prevention, and treatment of foot problems. With the help of generous donations from the podiatry community, APERF has funded 22 research projects in the past 12 years.

To make a donation to APERF or find out more about grant criteria, please contact the APERF trustees on 03 9416 3111 or visit www.apodc.com.au/apodclaperf.htm

Health Funds Update

With the introduction of HICAPS in the past twelve months, the APodC has begun to deal with matters associated with billing and rebates on podiatry services. Earlier this year, some work was undertaken to consider the billing practices of podiatrists across the country in terms of the codes utilised by podiatrists and the interpretation of those podiatrists' bills by health funds. In the process, it has become clear that:

- n The majority of health funds, and in particular the major funds, provide rebates on just a handful of item numbers from the PPT (often 5 or 6 out of a potential 148 items – including 70 surgery items).
- n There are different rules for different funds (what codes they rebate on, how much they will rebate) and those rules change frequently.
- n There are different rules and rebates for each fund from state to state.

n There are different rules for different members of each fund depending on type of membership, when they joined, etc.

n Many of the fund staff members are unclear on the rules and rebates

... almost 347,000 occasions of service ... just over 60% of the costs billed were rebated.

available for codes other than consultations.

With around 30 funds across Australia, it is almost impossible to create a current table of podiatry item numbers rebated by each fund for each category of member, so often requested by private practitioners, in order to simplify the billing process at their end. Whilst this work is ongoing, podiatrists are reminded that the full list of

Podiatrists Prescribing Terminology recognised by HICAPS can be found at <http://www.apodc.com.au>.

In other developments, a recent report indicated that podiatry services account for only 2.4% of the total ancillary benefits paid out by health funds and 3% of all services provided – ie: occasions of service (June 2002 financial quarter,) which suggests that as a collective group, the profession has limited lobbying potential. For the almost 347,000 occasions of service which were recognised for payment of benefits, just over 60% of the costs billed were rebated. This compares with 56% for dental services (whom many seek to emulate for their vast range of codes) and 62% for physiotherapy who charge predominantly on a consultations basis.

The APodC anticipates that the introduction of HICAPS will provide the profession with an important vehicle for national collaboration and communication with private health

University of Western Sydney Gains Accreditation

The Australasian Podiatry Council is pleased to announce that the podiatry undergraduate course at the University of Western Sydney has been accredited.

“UWS is the first Australasian course to be accredited which is a significant achievement,” the APodC’s policy and projects manager, Alison Petchell, said. “The accreditation team was impressed with the podiatry school – they felt the course content and the delivery of the program were strong, with an evidenced-based approach, regular reviews, and a demonstrated willingness to incorporate feedback. The clinical placement program and the state-of-the-art facilities were also commended.

“The accreditation team also acknowledged the podiatry school’s dedicated staff who have excelled in the quality and breadth of their work. Their output, which includes research, publications, conference presentations, higher degree qualifications and successful grant applications, is prodigious,” she said.

The Accreditation Process

The APodC believes the podiatry course accreditation program promotes transparency in the review of podiatry courses — an important function. The program is an external accountability process offered by the profession, which goes beyond that conducted in the immediate academic environment. With the ongoing threat of financial restrictions and emerging changes in the delivery of education in the tertiary sector, this program is an important link between educational bodies and the profession for which students are being trained.

Therefore, the accreditation program was designed in consultation with representatives from key groups within the podiatric community including podiatrists’ registration boards, state member associations and educational institutions.

Also, a set of minimum standards for the undergraduate education of

podiatrists has been established by the APodC. These standards form the basis of the accreditation program, and they are designed to reflect contemporary practice and to incorporate the expectations of the profession. Key components of these standards are the course curriculum, staffing, research and scholarly activity, infrastructure, procedures, and systems.

The model for the accreditation of undergraduate podiatry courses adopted by the Australasian Podiatry Council involves two parts: the completion of a self assessment questionnaire and an on-site visit.

The Self Assessment

The self assessment involves a series of questions on aspects of the course. These questions are designed to gauge how effectively the institution is meeting the minimum standards for undergraduate education of podiatrists.

MAHS Benefits Alice Springs

The new referral program for Health Care Card holders operating in Alice Springs is an example of a MAHS- funded program that improves access to podiatry services for people in rural and remote areas.

Under the new system a GP can refer a patient to an allied health professional for up to five sessions which are covered by this Commonwealth funding. This system has also made it more viable for allied health professionals to operate in areas such as Alice Springs.

Podiatrist Darralyn Duffy derives professional and personal satisfaction from this approach.

“There are no State-funded podiatrists in Alice,” she said. “So this Health Care Card approach means needy people, who otherwise could not afford to use the service, can receive the care they need. Also, we have been able to solve long term problems as well as provide preventative care including reducing the risk of ulceration within the diabetic population. It really is a very satisfying job.”

The MAHS funding is a first in terms of the Commonwealth Government becoming involved with allied health funding and provides support for podiatry services.

Source: Regional Health Check, November 2002, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing

Research Brings Awards and Recognition

Research into the cause of falls in older people has formed the basis of Hylton Menz’s recently awarded PhD – School of Physiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales – and contributed to his success with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), which granted him an Australian Clinical Research Fellowship.

Dr Menz, formerly a lecturer in podiatry and currently a full-time research fellow at the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute in Sydney, undertook balance and gait assessments of nearly 200 subjects up to 93 years of age. He found that subjects with a high risk of falling (such as frail older people and those with diabetic peripheral neuropathy) exhibited similar walking patterns.

“Most falls take place when people are walking. So we set out to try and discover what makes people fall. Through gait analysis (walking assessment), we

concluded that people who fell walked with erratic head movements that may affect their vision. Therefore, they may have difficulty perceiving obstacles and are more likely to walk into them and subsequently fall,” Dr Menz said.

This gait analysis procedure was found to be capable of identifying the risk of falling with 76% accuracy, suggesting a future practical application that could reduce the likelihood of falls and associated serious injuries.

Dr Menz will continue this research with assistance of an NHMRC Australian Clinical Research Fellowship when he returns to La Trobe University next year. “With the Fellowship funds, I will be able to undertake large scale studies that assess foot and ankle risk factors for falls in older people. I will carry out some laboratory-based biomechanical studies and some community-based studies.”

He believes his Fellowship will not only raise the profile of foot

ation Status

A document is completed by the course coordinator/head of school, in collaboration with staff of the school as required. The self-assessment is also an opportunity to provide description, documentation, and comment to the accreditation team. Schools are encouraged to utilise any pre existing documentation to facilitate this process where appropriate.

Once submitted, the APodC reviews the report, and a summary is prepared. This information is circulated to the accreditation team appointed by the APodC who will review the information supplied in the report, requesting further detail if required.

The On-Site Visit

The on-site visit is conducted by members of the accreditation team in consultation with the respective course coordinator/head of school. The visit is conducted over one and a half days and involves a tour of the facilities and

discussion revolving around the minimum education standards and issues identified in the self assessment report. The accreditation team may request to meet with key people during this visit including students and staff. At the conclusion of the visit, the accreditation team meet with senior management and table a draft preliminary report.

Recommendations and Outcomes

On completion of the accreditation process, the accreditation team reports the outcomes of the accreditation. This includes descriptions of identified strengths and areas for improvement, a report of the minimum educational standards met and final recommendations on accreditation status.

Once accreditation is achieved, this status remains valid for five years provided that there are no substantial alterations made to the course content during this time.

Podiatry Services in Demand

The Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council has identified podiatry as the health service 'most in need of recruitment' in rural areas. This survey resulted from data provided by all state and territory health departments.

Again podiatry ranked highly in terms of allied health positions funded through the new Federal Government 'More Allied Health Services' (MAHS) program. This outcome was the result of a survey conducted by the Divisions of General Practice.

The Australasian Podiatry Council office has experienced an increase in the number of potential employers in both Australia and New Zealand seeking information about offering employment to successful overseas candidates. As part of its agreement with the Commonwealth Government, the Australasian Podiatry Council provides skills assessment for overseas practitioners seeking to practice podiatry in Australia.

For podiatrists seeking employment, the APodC has created a link on its website to – www.justhealthjobs.com.au – a service provided by the Australian Healthcare Association. Also, all successful candidates are now being directed to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMIA) in order to consider the option of 'skills matching'.

This service allows prospective employers and employees to be matched up, where a prospective immigrant is prepared to live and work in an area of Australia where his/her skills are in demand. The applicants' personal and occupational details are included in DIMIA's Skill Matching Database which is circulated to all State and Territory Governments and some employer groups who may then contact applicants to seek additional information and have the option of nominating them for migration to Australia. For more information, visit www.immi.gov.au/skills/skills.html

Recognition

problems in older people but also of podiatry in general. "As far as I am aware, this is the first time a Fellowship of this kind has been awarded to a podiatrist undertaking a foot-related study. NHMRC acknowledgment sets a significant precedent and should encourage podiatrists to pursue these research funding opportunities."

As falls and injury prevention for older people have been identified as priorities by the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia, Dr Menz's research is likely to have significant benefits for the community. Also, an international audience of health practitioners will have access to the research findings through their publication in well-respected health and medical journals such as *Gait and Posture*, *Age and Ageing*, *Journal of Gerontology (Medical Sciences)* and the *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*. Dr Menz will also be presenting some of his findings at the Australasian Podiatry Conference in Perth next year.



Dr Menz undertakes a gait assessment.

Perth Sets the Pace for the Podiatry of the Future

The location of the conference in Perth, the capital of Western Australia, the largest state in Australia, is no coincidence. This setting is apt as it provides space for creative thinking about podiatry from a range of perspectives. Taking a more lateral approach to professional development, the conference mandate is to challenge the podiatry community to go outside their comfort zone. The exciting geographic location – a buzzing riverside metropolis of 1.2 million people – will inspire new ideas and offer more opportunities for delegates to socialise informally. Beyond the four walls of the conference centre, while golfing or wining and dining, delegates will be able to reflect on and argue about the diverse conference menu of consumer comment, scholarly research, clinical innovations, change implementation presentations, professional development, funding systems, marketing opportunities and participator provider organisations.

Push yourself outside your comfort zone and be rewarded with stimulating social, cultural, and intellectual experiences at the 2003 Australasian Podiatry Conference.

Over a picnic in the city's Kings Park or on a Swan River surf cat ride, delegates can discuss any one of the 52 research papers presented by an impressive array of Australian, New Zealand and international speakers including featured research that has clinical applications, such as presentations on preventing falls in the elderly and treating peripheral neuropathy, better understanding the treatment of plantar fasciitis and using shoe inserts to treat back pain. There are also presentations that will encourage podiatrists to consider their role

more broadly in the multidisciplinary context, while providing fodder for many conversations at the concluding night's dinner dance.

Keynote speaker, Professor Mark Cornwall, who has a PhD in Biomechanics and is an American Physical Therapist as well as a Certified Pedorthotist, will contribute a multitude of ideas in six different presentations during the conference, including a discussion on current theories in foot pathomechanics. In addition he will present detailed discussions on foot function during normal walking, including the windlass mechanism, patterns of movement of the navicular bone and the influence of first ray mobility on forefoot plantar pressure and rearfoot kinematics.

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Resources Promote Podiatry to New Audience

The APodC is developing new resources, including a series of posters, for use by members – the new posters are modern and vibrant and, along with the new Footmark, they are great products for podiatry clients and the public alike.

A general podiatry poster was included with the September Bulletin and a new Children's Feet poster is enclosed. The posters are part of a strategy to update Council resources and to extend their distribution beyond the podiatry community. The Children's Feet poster will receive media support – the poster along with a media release and brochure will be sent to selected parenting and children's magazines and relevant health magazines. The Council hopes to reach an unconverted audience by this means. This timing will also allow member associations to target state-based media for back to school stories and capitalise on the media interest that exists at that time. People will be directed to their local podiatrist and to the member associations to obtain copies of the Children's Feet poster.

The Council will also explore distribution opportunities beyond podiatrists, so that stakeholder organisations have access to these important resources.

Podiatrists can participate in this campaign by organising for the display of posters in local venues such as hospitals, community health centres, child and maternal health centres, schools, and kindergartens. Dropping off a poster to your local school or kindergarten can be a good icebreaker, leading into foot health conversations and may lead to other promotional opportunities. Do children at your local school need a talk on foot health? Do parents at your local kinder want more information about choosing shoes? Giving posters to these organisations and to the children themselves may be a good way of sending the message home. Many parents are unaware that their children's feet are not yet fully formed and can be easily damaged by socks and shoes that are too tight.

An updated consumer brochure, Your Podiatrist Talks About Feet, is also available. Visit apodc.com.au to preview these resources online and download an order form, or use the enclosed Resource Order Form to order additional copies of these great new resources.



Podiatry School Opens in Auckland

Auckland University of Technology's Podiatry Clinic was officially opened in October, after a successful transition from Wellington's Weltec.

"AUT's Podiatry Clinic is invaluable for the professional development of students, but also provides a service, which may not always be accessible to the wider community," Lynne Taylor, AUT's Acting Head, School of Physiotherapy and Podiatry, said.

"...the future looks extremely bright for podiatry in New Zealand."

Paul Bennett has been appointed Professor, Faculty of Health at the new Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Professor Bennett's role at AUT is to assist in the development of AUT's new podiatry program. "New Zealand podiatrists have an excellent reputation in the community. This is not only the case in New Zealand, but also in the international arena. This is to the credit of the former Central Institute of Technology academic staff in Wellington. Many Kiwis, like Associate Professor Mark Stevenson, Craig Payne, and Barry Hawes, have graduated from CIT to go on and provide an enormous amount of leadership and inspiration to members of the podiatry profession over the years."

"Podiatry's transition from the previous institute of technology location to a university environment offers the profession a new opportunity to continue



At the official opening of the Auckland University of Technology's Podiatry Clinic, (L-R) Trevor Tillotson, Chair, NZ Podiatrists Board; Simon Speight, President, NZ Society; Alison Petchell, Professor Paul Bennett; and Professor Max Abbott, Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, AUT.

this growth. In the short amount of time I've been involved with the AUT staff and local podiatry profession, I've been amazed at how advanced, resourceful and forward thinking New Zealand podiatrists are. The team at AUT includes two senior lecturers, Greg Coyle and Daniel Poratt DPM — two exceptionally talented, progressive and hard working podiatrists — who are real asset to AUT and the future of the podiatry profession."

The new facilities at AUT are state-of-art, including a 12 plinths treatment centre, paediatrics area, fully equipped

operating theatre, radiology facility for in-house radiographs and processing, and a gait lab.

"Greg Coyle was instrumental in establishing a memorandum of understanding with one of New Zealand's largest public hospitals, The North Shore Hospital, which will accept AUT podiatry students for clinical placement in 2003. There is strong evidence that demand for entry into the podiatry program in 2003 is likely to be high. All together, the future looks extremely bright for podiatry in New Zealand," Professor Bennett said.

Foot Pain Message Reaches the Mainstream

Foot pain will no longer be ignored by the thousands of Australians who came in contact with podiatry's Foot Health Week message this year. During the week, hundreds of people came face to face with podiatrists at shopping centres, malls, and shoes stores. While many more had their foot queries answered via freecall 1800 lines operating in Victoria, South Australia, New Zealand, and Western Australia. Direct mail campaigns reached businesses in Victoria, resulting in requests for paid foot assessments from organisations such as the

Melbourne City Council, and 8,000 GPs based in New South Wales.

Local campaigns were popular among many podiatrists, judging by the enthusiastic ordering of resources including the new Footmark.

Unfortunately, Foot Health Week coincided with the tragic events in Bali and therefore from a media perspective was largely overshadowed by this compelling story. However, thanks to hardworking public relations staff many media interviews and newspaper editorials were set up prior to Foot Health Week, and well-placed articles in industry and business

publications reached important groups within the community, including the Australian Nurses Federation, the Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine, and the Australian College of Occupational Health Nurses.

Foot Health Week continues to raise the profile of podiatrists in the community and to focus attention on important foot health issues. The Council and all the PR representatives will continue to work on behalf of members to get the most out of this promotional opportunity before, during and after Foot Health Week.