

## **Prohibiting Fee Discrimination Against Podiatric Physicians and Surgeons**

Fee discrimination against podiatric physicians and surgeons, also known as podiatrists, occurs when a private insurer pays a podiatrist less for furnishing the exact same service as an MD or DO based solely on the fact that the physician is a DPM rather than an MD or DO.

- **Fee discrimination by private insurers limits consumer choice and increases consumer costs.** In order to avoid such discrimination and ensure they receive fair reimbursement, podiatrists must choose not to participate in health plan networks. Electing not to participate allows them to bill at rates that better reflect their costs and value. However, podiatrists' choice not to participate in networks limits consumers' choices of network providers and increases their costs when they have to receive out-of-network care.
- **Fee discrimination is unfair because podiatric physicians have training and costs that are comparable to those of medical doctors.**
  - Doctors of podiatric medicine receive medical education and training comparable to medical doctors, including:
    - four years of undergraduate education;
    - four years of graduate education at one of nine podiatric medical colleges; and
    - at least two or three years of hospital-based postgraduate residency training.
  - Doctors of podiatric medicine have the same or similar costs as medical doctors, including
    - the cost of maintaining an office and staff; and
    - the cost of malpractice insurance.
- **Providing access to podiatric physicians is an important component in ensuring quality of care.** The growing epidemics of diabetes and obesity and their concurrent complications, along with the aging of the population, are among the many reasons why podiatric physicians are necessary and important members of the physician community and demand for their services is increasing.
  - In 2007, an estimated 24 million people in the United States, almost 8 percent of the population, had diabetes.
  - Podiatric physicians play an extremely important role in the prevention and management of complications of the lower extremity in those with diabetes and are key members of the diabetes multidisciplinary team.
  - A recent study conducted by Thomson Reuters concluded that patients with diabetes who see a podiatric physician are less likely to suffer hospitalization or amputation than patients who do not receive care from a podiatric physician.
- **Podiatric physicians furnish high value, cost-effective care.** Results of a recent study conducted by Thomson Reuters indicate that care by a podiatric physician has a positive return on investment. According to the study, each dollar invested in care by podiatric physicians offers up to \$51 in savings.