

The Majority of Foot/Ankle Care in the U.S. is Performed by Podiatric Physicians but Medicaid Patients May Not Have Access

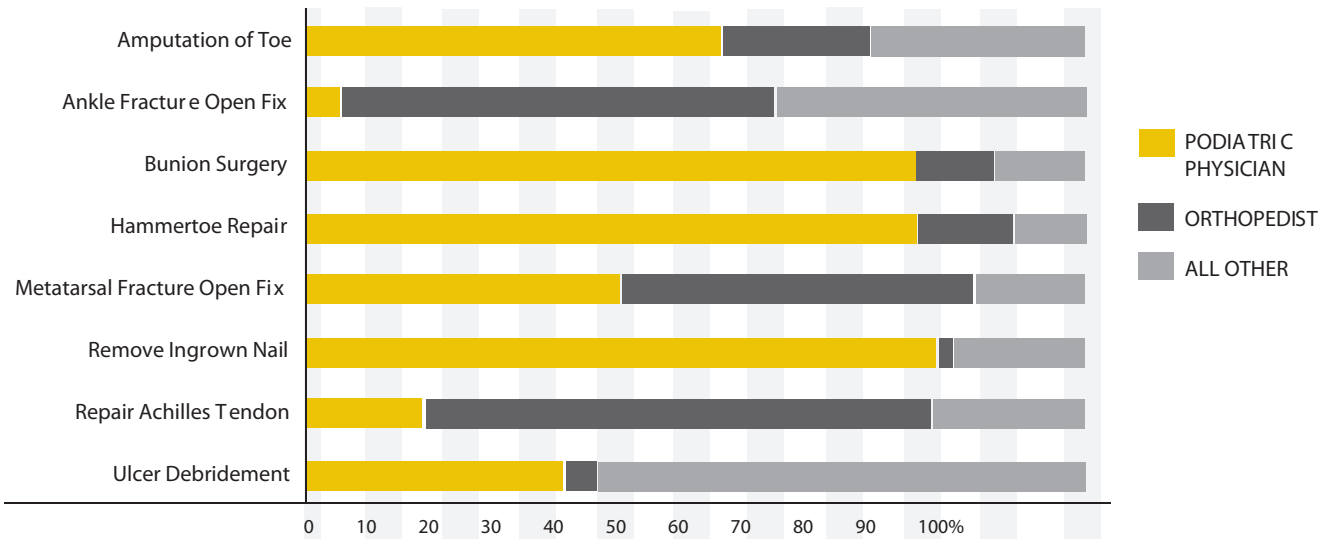
For foot and ankle issues, most Americans seek out specialists for their care, typically a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine, an orthopedist, or other physician. The majority of medical care of the foot and ankle is performed by podiatrists.

Even though foot and ankle care is generally a covered benefit under Medicaid, the program currently teases out a separate podiatry benefit as being “optional” for patients, focusing on the provider of services, rather than ensuring coverage of medically necessary care regardless of the qualified professional furnishing such care. Thus, Medicaid effectively discriminates and can arbitrarily preclude patient access to a licensed and credentialed specialized physician class even though the services they provide—foot and ankle care—are a covered benefit.

Whenever public or private health insurance programs preclude patient access to podiatric physicians, there are adverse impacts on our health-care delivery system:

1. Costs increase by driving patients to a more expensive point of service (e.g., hospital emergency rooms) for the same services.
2. It exacerbates America’s growing physician shortage by not appropriately utilizing the full range of physician specialists.
3. It denies patients the option of seeing the physicians who are best trained for the foot and ankle care they seek.

COMMON FOOT & ANKLE PROBLEMS TREATED BY PHYSICIANS



Source: Thomson Reuters Market Scan survey data for 2010 commercial health insurance claims