PODIATRIC SURGERY

Author
William J. Weissinger, DPM, DABPS

The specialty of Podiatric Surgery is new to Huntington Hospital and its staff.

The podiatrist is the medical specialist who diagnoses and treats disorders of the human foot. This may involve the performance of medical, surgical or biomechanical procedures and may entail the use of prescribed medications, ordering laboratory/radiologic testing, corrective devices and physical modalities.

There are approximately 30,000 podiatrists in the United States, approximately 2,600 are Board Certified in Foot Surgery through The American Board of Podiatric Surgery.

Many common foot problems include: warts, corns, callouses, ingrown toe nails, fungal nails, hammer toes and bunion deformities. These can be treated via conservative means which include oral medication or corrective devices such as foot orthotics. Many resistant deformities can be treated via surgical corrections utilizing the ambulatory surgical care unit.

Warts, which are often mistaken for callouses or corns, are caused by a specific virus and appear on the sole (plantar aspect) of the foot. They have a spongy appearance with little black or brown spots which are actually blood vessels feeding the growth. A light ring appears around each growth and separates it from the surrounding skin. Warts can be treated via topical agents, surgical curettage or laser therapy.

Fungal nails, like many skin conditions, can spread to the nails. The infested nail may actually separate from the bed or may develop black, yellow or brownish streaks in it and become markedly thickened. Laboratory cultures can now be done to determine if a fungus is involved and a regimen of topical and oral medication can help this condition.

Thick toenails from trauma, like dropping a heavy object on it, may result in an unsightly and painful deformity, making it difficult to wear closed shoes. These nails are tender and subject to irritation and infection. At times, the root (matrix) of the nail can be cauterized or excised in order to alleviate the aberrant nail growth.

Hammer toes are frequently due to inherited foot structures or underlying neurologic disease. This contraction of the toe caused by a tightening of the soft tissues about the joints, forces the toe to assume an abnormal position, and often these deformities press upon shoe gear and cause a corn to develop. The pain arises in either destruction of the small joint of the toe with "wear and tear" type of arthritis or the formation of an abnormal sac (bursa) overlying the joint that can become inflamed and tender in shoe gear

The bunion deformity is an outgrowth of bone in and around the bone (metatarsal) just behind the Great Toe. When the toe is twisted and bent over, it is called Hallux (Latin word for big toe) Valgus, the twisted appearance of the toe. If conservative care via analgesics, orthotics, padding, or physical modalities is not effective, surgical intervention can be performed.

The bunion deformity is a dynamic and complex deformity and a comprehensive examination and radiologic evaluation is necessary to determine the correct surgical procedure to perform. This selection depends upon factors such as age, weight of the patient, width of the foot, and quality of pain free motion of the Great Toe joint space. Members of both sexes may be symptomatic, but women seem to be slightly more affected with the wearing of narrow toe box shoes with an elevated heel that forces their body weight

forward. Procedures vary in complexity and range from removal of the bump of bone (bunion) to various positional changes of segments of the Great Toe and contiguous structures via cuts in the bone (osteotomy).

Proper alignment and contour of the Great Toe and bony segment attached is of utmost importance in correction of this deformity. If the Great Toe joint is arthritic, procedures today can be performed to reconstruct the joint or replace the joint with an implant.

The field of Podiatric Surgery is rapidly growing and expanding with exciting new treatment and modalities to keep patients on their feet.

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