What is a Pedorthist

and How Can I Become One?

AN EXCITING HEALTH CARE PROFESSION AWAITS YOU
The Pedorthic Profession

Pedorthics is the design, manufacture, modification and fit of footwear, shoes and foot orthoses to alleviate problems caused by disease, overuse, congenital condition or injury.

The profession of pedorthics began to emerge in the late 1950s, after World War II and an outbreak of polio created a need to deal with foot trauma through footwear. Today, pedorthics is a well-established allied health profession contributing an invaluable service to public health.

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Pedorthists and Their Role in Health Care

A pedorthist is a health care professional who is specifically educated and trained to manage comprehensive pedorthic patient care. This includes patient assessment, formulation of a treatment plan, implementation of the treatment plan, follow-up and practice management.

Pedorthists specialize in using therapeutic shoes, shoe modifications for therapeutic purposes, below the ankle partial foot prosthesis and foot orthoses to address lower-limb, knee and hip related problems and pathologies that start at the ankle or below. A pedorthist understands the properties of footwear and the interaction between the patient’s foot and the device or shoe, which makes them skilled at evaluating feet and fitting footwear.

When a foot requires medical attention, footwear becomes a factor in the patient’s treatment, recovery or rehabilitation. The doctor treats the patient’s foot and the pedorthist addresses the patient’s footwear needs. After the physician has determined what kind of assistance the footwear should provide for the patient, a prescription is written which informs the pedorthist about what care is needed.

When a patient’s ability to walk is affected, everything that surrounds or touches the foot – whether it’s foot orthoses, shoes, boots, slippers, sandals, socks, hosiery, night splints, partial-foot prosthetics or other devices – interacts with the foot. A pedorthist selects and modifies footwear and/or other prosthetic or orthotic devices to help people maintain or regain as much mobility as possible. They also possess the skills and knowledge to make adjustments both inside and outside of footwear including the creation of products to assist in a patient’s recovery.

Foot orthoses are an important component of footwear that can accommodate, support or relieve specific conditions, as well as improve the foot’s function. In addition to designing and fabricating an appropriate orthosis, a pedorthist provides personalized attention in selecting, fitting and modifying shoes so that the orthosis can be worn and function effectively.

Pedorthists follow up with the patient to make sure the footwear functions as the doctor prescribed. A footwear prescription takes into account the patient’s medical history, activities of daily living and treatment goals.
Part of the Health Care Team

Pedorthists give physicians a range of conservative – or non-surgical – treatment options.

Increasingly, doctors and other qualified prescribers write footwear prescriptions to relieve pressure, redistribute weight, accommodate or support medical conditions, prevent injuries, compensate for imbalances or overuse and preclude the worsening of damage to the foot.

In addition to addressing lower limb problems, footwear prescriptions can address foot-related problems, such as lower back pain, pelvic imbalances or other limits to the patient’s physical ability to perform. Footwear prescriptions can even help athletes return to their sports faster from some minor injuries.

Practicing Pedorthists

Pedorthists practice in a variety of settings.

Many of them are in private practice, either in a doctor’s office type of setting or in a retail environment, seeing patients by appointment. Others work in hospitals and clinics as part of an in-house treatment team. The future prospect of the field is unlimited based on the growing number of people with health conditions related to the pedorthic practice area, such as diabetes.
Education and Training in Pedorthics

The study of pedorthics requires knowledge of anatomy, pathology, biomechanics which involves human locomotion, gait analysis, kinesiology, physiotherapy and other related fields.

Students attend specialized pedorthic courses to learn about footwear fitting, lower extremity orthotic design, fabrication and materials, shoe construction and modification, and patient and practice management.

A list of approved pedorthic education courses is available on the Pedorthic Footwear Association’s web site, www.pedorthics.org. All listed courses are approved by the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE), the recognized authority for the development and approval of pedorthic education. Course listings can also be found on NCOPE’s web site at www.ncope.org. Many courses combine on line learning with in person training, providing the flexibility to learn at your own pace and minimize expenses for classes outside of your geographic region.

Once a future pedorthist has completed the pedorthic course, they obtain training in order to gain experience utilizing pedorthic approaches and techniques in a real world setting. After completion of 1,000 hours of practical experience, one is eligible to sit for the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC) Certified Pedorthist (C.Ped.) examination.
The examination to become an ABC Certified Pedorthist (C.Ped.) is a three hour, multiple-choice computer based exam which consists of 165 items designed to measure the candidate’s knowledge of pedorthics. The exam tests the candidate on pedorthic assessment, formulation of a treatment plan, implementation, practice management, ethics and professionalism. Exams are given three times a year at locations nationwide.

Additional information on application deadlines, examination dates and a copy of the Certified Pedorthist Book of Rules and Candidate Guide are available at the ABC web site at www.abcop.org.

C.Ped.’s maintain their ABC credential by participation in the Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) program and renewing their credential each year. Credentials are renewed at the end of each five year MCE cycle after the C.Ped. has earned 55 continuing education credits in the five year cycle.

There are a few states that require a license or C.Ped. certification to practice pedorthics. Individuals should check their states requirements. The ABC provides licensure examinations in those states that require one.
Pedorthic Footwear Association

Founded in 1958, the Pedorthic Footwear Association (PFA) is a non-profit membership association of individuals and companies from a variety of disciplines who share an interest in pedorthics, from practice to education and research. Members include individuals, facilities where pedorthics is practiced, and manufacturers and suppliers of pedorthic products and services. For details, visit PFA's web site at www.pedorthics.org.

American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics, Inc.

Established in 1948, the American Board for Certification (ABC) is the national certifying and accrediting body for the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic professions. ABC has become the quality standard in O, P & P certification and today has more than 12,000 certified individuals. The ABC Scope of Practice for Pedorthics sets the standards for pedorthic practice and is available from the ABC web site. ABC grants the C.Ped. designation to individuals who have successfully passed the Pedorthic Examination. For more information, visit ABC’s web site at www.abcop.org.