

PODIATRIC MEDICINE (D.P.M.)

ACADEMIC AND CAREER INFORMATION

NATURE OF THE WORK, EARNINGS, AND OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK

Doctors of Podiatric Medicine (DPM), also known as Podiatrists, are podiatric physicians or surgeons who diagnose and treat conditions affecting the foot, ankle, and related structures of the leg. Podiatrists are specialized to prevent, diagnose, and treat ailments of the foot including disorders, diseases, and injuries. DPMs are defined as physicians by the federal government and make independent judgments, diagnose, perform surgery, administer medications, and prescribe physical therapy regimens. Practitioners can focus on a particular area of podiatric medicine such as surgery, sports medicine, biomechanics, geriatrics, pediatrics, orthopedics, and primary care. DPMs often detect serious health problems because a number of diseases manifest first through symptoms of the lower extremities (i.e., diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, or kidney disease). The demands for the skills of Podiatrists are increasing as disorders of the foot and ankle are among the most widespread and overlooked health problems.

Students interested in pursuing a DPM should consider a number of factors including the lifestyle offered by a career in podiatric medicine. Because there is a demand for podiatrists that exceeds the supply, the earnings of a podiatrist are high. In addition to desirable salaries, a podiatrist can also enjoy a flexible lifestyle. When comparing to other medical specialties, podiatry offers more options in practice structure. Those who seek a fast-paced, engaging atmosphere in a hospital emergency room and those looking for a more relaxed, family-friendly schedule can both thrive in the field of podiatry.

There are an estimated 15,000 podiatrists practicing in the U.S. (Board of Podiatric Medicine). Though earnings vary according to number of years in practice, type of practice, geographical location, and specialty, podiatrists enjoy very high earnings. Podiatrists earned a median net income of \$134,414. Podiatrists in partnerships tended to earn more than their colleagues in solo practice. Employment of podiatrists is expected to increase by 23 % from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. Because of the rising number of injuries sustained by a more active and increasingly older population, those who are severely overweight, and Americans who are diagnosed with diabetes, more people will turn to podiatrists creating an increase in demand for podiatrists.

PODIATRIC MEDICAL EDUCATION

There are nine colleges of podiatric medicine in the United States (2 in CA) that are accredited by the Council on Podiatric Medical Education. All of the colleges grant the degree of Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM). DPMs receive medical education and training comparable to medical doctors, which usually require four years of graduate coursework. The first two years are devoted largely to classroom instruction and laboratory work in the basic medical sciences, such as anatomy, physiology, microbiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, and pathology. During the third and fourth years, students concentrate on courses in clinical sciences, gaining experience in the college clinics, community clinics, and accredited hospitals. Clinical courses include but are not limited to general diagnosis, dermatology, general medicine, podiatric surgery, trauma, and biomechanics. After four years of study and receiving the DPM degree, doctors can begin a postdoctoral residency program to further strengthen and refine the practitioner's area of specialty.

Residency programs usually last two or more years and are based in accredited hospitals. Practitioners can focus on many different specialty areas within the field of podiatry, including surgery, sports medicine, biomechanics, geriatrics, pediatrics, orthopedics, or primary care.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Most first-year students entering the colleges of podiatric medicine possess baccalaureate degrees and about 10% have advanced degrees. Potential podiatric medical students may be evaluated on the basis of their grade point average (GPA), performance on the MCAT extracurricular and community activities, personal interview, professional potential, etc. Due to the competitive nature of the podiatric medical school application process and rigorous training required, students should *carefully consider their motivation and preparation for a career in podiatric medicine*. Women made up 467 (39%) of the applicants and 275 (41%) of matriculating students in 2015. For 2015 matriculating students into the first year of study at a school or college of podiatric medicine the average GPA was **3.39**, the average science GPA was 3.26 and the average non-science GPA was **3.61**. The average MCAT score was a 21.2.

Any major is appropriate for podiatric medical school preparation. While a natural science major requires many of the same basic pre-requisites, selecting a natural science major is not required for admission to any podiatric medical school. Students are advised to select a major they find interesting and to work at developing a broad-based, interdisciplinary foundation of knowledge and skills from which they can build upon.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CSULB courses which fulfill admission requirements for most U.S. programs:

Students maintain responsibility for verifying course selection with individual programs.

Coursework	CSULB Courses
One year of General Chemistry with Lab	Chemistry 111A & 111B
One year of Organic Chemistry with Lab	Chemistry 220A & 220B + 320L (Chem./Biochem. majors) OR 220A w/ 223A & 220B w/ 223B (Biology and other majors)
One year of General Biology with Lab	Biology 211 & 212 & 213
One year of General Physics with Lab	Physics 100A & 100B OR 151 & 152 & 254
One (or more) course in Biochemistry (MCAT)	Chemistry 441A and/or 441B or 448
Microbiology	Biology 311
One semester to one year of Calculus	Math 119A OR 122 & 123
One year of English	English 100 AND another course from the English department such as: 102, 180, 300
Social and Behavioral Sciences (MCAT)	Sociology 100 and Psychology 100 (MCAT 2015)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [American Podiatric Medical Association \(APMA\)](#)
- [American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine \(AACPM\)](#)
 - [AACPMC: Student Brochure \(pdf\)](#)
- [The Nine Colleges of Podiatric Medicine](#)

See your HPAO advisor for more information on Podiatric Medicine, the application process and a list of upcoming workshops and events.