

Podiatry



Health

Who are Podiatrists?

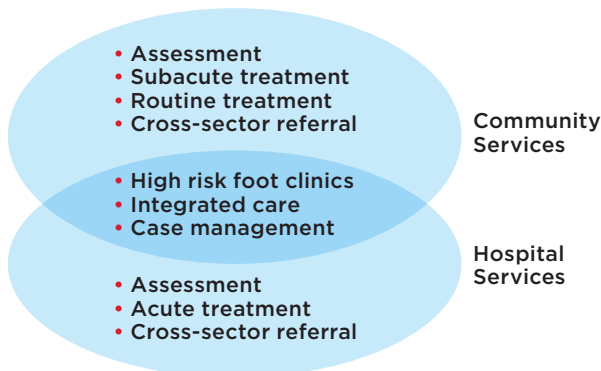
Podiatrists provide assessment, treatment and advice for the management of conditions and promotion of health related to the foot and associated lower limb. Podiatrists practice in a range of settings including hospitals, clinics, community and residential aged care settings in both the public and private sectors. Podiatrists provide treatment for skin and nail conditions, advice and modification for footwear and therapeutic soft tissue interventions, advice on biomechanics and structural problems, bone and joint pathology, gait analysis and management of systemic illnesses with foot manifestations.

Podiatry services directed to the care of 'high risk' foot pathologies contribute to hospital avoidance, reduced length of stay, improved management of high-acuity cases, reduced pain, reduced limb loss and reduced cost of care.

Podiatrists are Registered with the Podiatry Board of Australia

Service access and contact points

Podiatry services are accessed through self-referral, GP referral, triage and inpatient referral, residential aged care facility referral and through public outpatient services.



Workforce characteristics 2014



There are **4,136** Registered Podiatrists in Australia, of which **1,146** Podiatrists are registered in New South Wales

In NSW:



10% of annual registrations are first-time registrations

87.2% of Podiatrists received their qualification in Australia



35.5% of the workforce is employed part-time

On average Podiatrists work **36.9** hours per week



59.5% of the Podiatry workforce are female

9% are aged 55 or older



8 out of every **9** Podiatrists work in the private sector



2.6% of NSW Podiatrists identify as Aboriginal, up **0.8%** from 2011 and above the national average of **1.9%**

Considerations for service planning

- 8 out of 9 podiatrists practice in the private sector. Scope exists for public-private partnerships to enhance service delivery and continuity of care
- Public sector podiatrists generally provide higher-acuity services and are more highly-skilled
- Data on low-acuity services is scarce
- Trending and mapping of demand drivers and prevalence can be used to guide resource development
- Evidence indicates that high-risk foot clinics are linked to improved patient outcomes, reduced hospitalisations and reduced preventable limb loss

Drivers of Podiatry workforce supply

Limited numbers of public positions
The relatively flat structure of Podiatry services limits career progression opportunities
Service capacity can be impacted by staff leave in the absence of relief positions due to the small service sizes
Rural recruitment and retention is an ongoing challenge
Private sector practice is considered more lucrative
Supervision and development capacity for new graduates is limited

Challenges

Public system Podiatry services are becoming increasingly focused on high-acuity and high-risk cases, reducing service access for low acuity and care maintenance services.
Service standardisation and evidence-based guidelines are not fully established. Their development and implementation is an ongoing challenge
Data availability on service need is limited, making business cases for service expansion difficult to develop
Inconsistent adherence to podiatry pathways and workforce fragmentation are known to impact service delivery
The professional voice of podiatry is limited by the small number of senior podiatrists in comparison to other healthcare professions. Additionally, the high clinical orientation of the workforce limits opportunities for advocacy and collaboration



Drivers of demand for Podiatry services

Demand on the Podiatry workforce is projected to increase at an annual rate of 5.3% (Source: Health Workforce Australia)
The increasing population, the ageing population and the increasing burden of chronic diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and obesity
Public sector podiatrists generally provide higher acuity services than private sector podiatrists
Funding models e.g. Commonwealth Home Support Program, Chronic Disease Management Program
Lower socioeconomic groups are less likely to access private services due to cost and health literacy
The accessibility of private Podiatry services impacts on local public service demand
Aboriginal populations are likely to be in need of Podiatry services due to a higher prevalence of diabetes. Community engagement is key to enabling service delivery

Opportunities

High Risk Foot Clinics directly reduce the incidence of preventable lower limb amputations
Allied Health Assistants may be able to provide administrative and patient-facing support to reduce the burden of these tasks on Podiatrists. This can increase the capacity for Podiatrists to deliver high-level services. The technical nature of Podiatry interventions limits the scope of patient interventions deliverable by Allied Health Assistants
The quality and effectiveness of partnerships with private practices is dependent upon how individual services develop and maintain these relationships at the local level
Case Management presents an opportunity to promote continuity of care and reduce adverse outcomes in high-risk cases
Podiatric participation in multidisciplinary teams can enhance continuity of care, promote service utilisation and enhance the service profile of Podiatry

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016, Podiatry Workforce, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/workforce/podiatry/>
Health Workforce Australia, 2014, Australia's Health Workforce Series - Podiatrists in Focus
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