

Foot Health and Screenings for School-Age Children in Massachusetts

Incorporated under the general laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1906, the Massachusetts Podiatric Medical Society represents over 300 podiatric physicians and surgeons in the Commonwealth in advancing the quality of foot health care of its citizens. Not overlooked are the often unique foot health needs of our pediatric podiatric patients.

Today with the rising concern of childhood obesity and associated projected increase in type II diabetes the future burden on podiatrists in the care of podiatric pathology is great.

Along with hearing and vision testing, Massachusetts state DPH regulations in 105 CMR 200.600 mandates appropriate examination of the child's feet. We applaud the foresight in this old and minimal regulation for the examination of school children in Massachusetts. However, our goal at MPMS is to provide a more inclusive and sustainable children's foot health initiative that would encompass Health Education, Physical Education and Sports, Health Services and Screenings. We strongly encourage foot health screening along with growth, vision, hearing, scoliosis, communicable disease and dental screenings. As the guardians of foot health, we fully support the Massachusetts School Nurses

initiative to replace the antiquated current law, MGL Chapter 71, Section 53, with HB 430 and SB 349.

We believe that children's foot health problems are often overlooked or missed in the present system, as school nurses are often overwhelmed with the present work load, and that the present ratio of students to school nurses is inadequate and needs to be corrected. As a society we have advocated for our children's foot screenings in schools as mandated in DPH rules and regulations. Unfortunately, these screenings have not been adequately conducted for many years partly because of this school nurses staffing crisis.

As the primary foot health care providers for our Commonwealth's youth we stand ready to assist the nurses in their daily work and accept referrals from the system when foot pathology and complaints are detected. We need to see that our children's foot health needs are fully being met in our school system, especially for those most indigent, and we support the school nurse's initiative.

Public health issues of childhood obesity, sports injury prevention, treatment and conditioning, the increased incidence of type II diabetes, disparities in healthcare, smoking cessation programs, along with the need for proper footwear for our youngsters are just a few of the many overarching health concerns related to our children's foot health. Recently, the American Podiatric Medical Association kicked off its public health campaign entitled, "Knock Your Socks Off", to remind the public to take their socks off during regular check ups with their primary health care provider. Let's be sure to include our school-aged children in this campaign.

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Dr DiResta is a graduate of Boston College, he received his Doctorate in Podiatric Medicine from the Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine, and he completed his residency training in podiatric surgery at Northlake Hospital in Illinois. Dr DiResta received his Masters Degree in Public Health from Dartmouth Medical School. He is board certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery and is a Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

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