

# FOOT & ANKLE

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

### President's Report

One of the objectives of the FASIG is to keep our members abreast of current reimbursement and political issues that affect us as physical therapists who treat foot and ankle conditions. Reimbursement by third party payors for procedures and supplies such as foot orthoses and taping varies largely across the country. In California where I practice, insurance companies are taking longer than ever to reimburse for our services. Often payment is delayed until seemingly endless support documentation is submitted; an initial denial is given which requires follow-up letters and phone calls until ultimately we are paid for only a portion of our services. It is unfair that we have to jump through flaming hoops and navigate treacherous obstacles in order to be paid by the health insurance companies for our services. Patients who have been adversely affected by the economy and the current insurance fiasco are attending physical therapy less often, attempt to delay making their co-payments and deductibles, and often can't afford to complete a therapeutically grounded PT treatment regimen. Our practice has all but given up on trying to deal with third party payors in terms of billing for foot orthoses or taping supplies and/or procedures.

I would be very interested to hear from our SIG members just how they are being reimbursed for these services. Which CPT or other codes have been effectively reimbursed in your state? Let me suggest that we communicate our findings on the Orthopt.org bulletin board for the FASIG. We can also use this mechanism to discuss problematic patient conditions, new techniques, and treatment pearls.

The FASIG has been busy distributing the foot and ankle content survey to many of our entry-level physical therapy programs. Once compiled and analyzed, this information will help us establish a standard base curriculum of the foot and ankle for entry-level PT schools. It will also be used to establish a scope of practice of the foot and ankle that can be incorporated into initiating a fellowship in this specialty area of orthopaedics.

Each year that the FASIG offers a preconference course or similar educational endeavor, a portion of the money earned is placed into our encumbered funds account. During last year's CSM Business Meeting, it was voted to apportion from this fund, \$7500 for 2 years to the Orthopaedic Section for research that is focused on the foot and ankle. The research committee will decide on a worthy study to receive this grant. It is open to all Orthopaedic Section members of the APTA, including our Foot & Ankle SIG. Our SIG needs to substantiate the techniques and procedures that we employ to treat our patients, through sound clinical and biomechanical evidence, so that third party payors will reimburse for our services and supplies.

I hope that each of you had a wonderful summer and that the new school year has brought a new enthusiasm and energy to you and your family. The current economic trends

have had a profound effect upon our profession and who knows what the federal Healthcare reform holds for us?! Despite all of this, I am confident there will always be a demand for our multidimensional services.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Stephen Paulseth, PT, MS, DPT, SCS, ATC*

