



NPs & Foot and Ankle Surgeons Working Together to Provide the Best Care

When nurse practitioners (NPs) and foot and ankle surgeons work in harmony to treat patients, outcomes improve and patients thrive. But how exactly do NPs and foot and ankle surgeons collaborate on a daily basis in patient care?

Sean T. Grambart, DPM, FACFAS, of Carle Physician Group in Champaign, Illinois, works with several NPs in his practice, and based on his experience, NPs and foot and ankle surgeons are collaborating more than ever, especially as the role of NPs continues to expand in different departments. “We work together on everything from trauma cases in the emergency department, to infections and trauma in inpatient hospital settings to flatfoot deformities and bunions in regular office patients,” he explains.

NPs and foot and ankle surgeons typically take a team approach to treating patients, particularly those with multiple comorbidities, such as a patient living with diabetes, renal disease and peripheral vascular

disease. “A team approach gives these patients the best chance of an optimal outcome,” notes Dr. Grambart.

Since NPs practice independently, they help foot and ankle surgeons better manage their patient loads and in turn free up time so other duties can be completed. For example, Dr. Grambart’s NPs assist with postoperative patients and nonsurgical fracture care. He can put a patient on an NP’s schedule if needed but also strives to make himself available to the NPs if he has time in between patients.

How foot and ankle surgeons and NPs decide to delineate or divide their responsibilities depends largely on NPs’ training and surgical skills. Dr. Grambart maintains that surgeons must take the time to train their NPs properly to help them develop their surgical technique and feel comfortable treating postoperative patients. “Highly trained NPs are a great asset to any practice,” he attests.

While NPs and foot and ankle surgeons often enjoy healthy and productive working relationships, challenges can arise. In Dr. Grambart’s opinion, not understanding each other’s scope of practice stands as the biggest roadblock between NPs and foot and ankle surgeons. He says the best way to resolve this is for NPs and foot and ankle surgeons to openly communicate what each of their specialties does and what they offer to patients. This open communication also strengthens the partnership between the foot and ankle surgeon and NP.

Dr. Grambart considers his working relationship with the NPs in his practice a win for his patients. “Collaborating with NPs has resulted in better patient care,” he says. “That’s the most important thing.”

Visit TakeANewLook.org for more on how the College is spreading the word among NPs and other providers about foot and ankle surgeons’ specialized training.

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