



“I WISH I HAD AN ANSWER TO THAT BECAUSE I AM TIRED OF ANSWERING THAT QUESTION.” - YOGI BERRA

There seems to be some confusion about the terms **podiatrist** versus **foot and ankle surgeon** and what exactly the difference is.

Recently, I was in a hospital meeting where we discussed changing our department name to one that better defines what we do in the hospital—the department of Foot and Ankle Surgery. One of my colleagues in another specialty stated that I was not a foot and ankle surgeon—I was a podiatrist. “That is why you went to podiatry school.” I found this irritating because others were defining my profession.

First of all, I did not attend “podiatry school.” There is no such thing! There are colleges of podiatric medicine. Attending a college of podiatric medicine made me a podiatric physician and surgeon. Similarly, doctors who graduate from a college of medicine are allopathic physicians, while doctors who graduate from a college of osteopathic medicine are osteopathic physicians. Being a podiatric physician does not define our profession, it defines our medical degree. Our profession or trade is defined by what

we do after our medical education, much the same as our allopathic and osteopathic colleagues. Allopathic and osteopathic physicians do not define themselves by their education. They do not state “I am an allopathic orthopaedic surgeon,” or “I am an osteopathic vascular surgeon.” They simply state their profession: “I am an orthopaedic surgeon.” Why would we be any different?

So, by *education* we are podiatric physicians. Some of us go on to be podiatrists. Don’t get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with being a podiatrist. These doctors perform a much needed service that no other profession provides. Others, including all ACFAS members, go on to train to become foot and ankle surgeons. We do our residencies in foot and ankle surgery, not in podiatry.

After training, virtually all medical specialties demonstrate competence in their field by becoming board certified. We become board certified in foot surgery and rearfoot and ankle surgery, not in podiatry. No other specialty has a board certification for foot and ankle surgery. The entity that certifies

us is the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery, and a few years ago, they went through a crucial name change to more accurately define what we do.

Then, after becoming board certified in their field of expertise, doctors join one or more professional societies that provide lifelong education and services and help to advance patient care. We have joined the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. Seventy-five years ago, our founders could have chosen a dozen different names, but they wisely chose the American College of Foot Surgeons. And, we defined our profession even further in 1991 when we became the American College of Foot *and Ankle* Surgeons.

We do our residencies in foot and ankle surgery, become board certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery in foot surgery and rearfoot surgery and become members of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. If that doesn’t make you a foot and ankle Surgeon, then what does?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurence Rubin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurence G. Rubin, DPM, FACFAS
ACFAS President

Questions for Dr. Rubin? Write him at president@acfias.org.