



## **“ONPP” a new voice in the French institutional health system**

**10 760 podiatrist in France**

### **What is the French “Ordre national des pédicures-podologues”- “ONPP”?**

Created by the law in 2005 and operational after the elections of its representatives in June 2006, the professional Order for podiatrists is the result of nearly 30 years of battle from the profession.

The purpose of ONPP is to represent all podiatric professionals, to assist in the recognition of podiatry in the French health care system as a true health profession, fully integrated into the process of care and to help these professionals to gain their independence and manage their affairs by self regulated..., the functions and mission are clearly defined by the law.

*“The podiatric Order assures the defense of the honor and the independence of the profession, it monitors the preservation of the principles of morality and the respect, by all its members, of their rights, duties and professional obligations, as well as the observance of the rules that were promulgated by the Code of the profession....”*

Fundamentally, the Order’s mission is to manage the organization and the discipline of the profession in support of the general public. This function of self regulation is defined in five specific items: morality, administrative and statutory, jurisdictional, consultative and mutual aid. The Order is also a special interlocutor for patients and for the different authorities of the French national health system.

Less than one year following its establishment, ONPP had published the first “deontological code” of the profession, integrated in the public health Code of the French national law system.

In order to be allowed to practice, podiatrists must be licensed, have completed 3 years of undergraduate education and rewarded by a State diploma. Presently, there are ten schools of podiatry in France. All future practitioners must enroll in their professional Order otherwise they are practicing illegally.

### **Initial education in Podiatric and French podiatrist qualifications**

The French practitioner is free to receive patients directly. He/she can make a diagnosis and can prescribe drugs from a restricted list. However the competences of the practitioner are defined within the framework of legal decrees. And it is very disappointing to admit that this decree has not been modified since 1946! There is a real difference between the law, the initial education

and actual practice. Victim of the medical monopoly, the profession is quite limited in its activities. For instance, a French podiatrist is not authorized to practice foot surgery - bleeding is forbidden; nor is it possible for a podiatrist to use anesthesia yet it is included in the training program... In 2010, podiatrists are forced to heal without being able to avoid pain? These acts are strictly and solely reserved to doctors. A situation, the ONPP cannot accept. These circumstances force the podiatric profession to claim its position as often as possible before the concerned public authorities.

Since ONPP has been created, regular meetings have taken place with the national union of initial education institutes (the SNIFPP – Syndicat national des instituts de formation en pédicurie-podologie). More specifically, It has been nearly two years since the representatives of the profession worked on the reengineering of the podiatrist diploma and the education that stands behind it - this work coordinated by the Ministry of Health. Now the Order, the National Federation, associations, syndicates of teachers and students, professional associations- all collaborate for the future. And this future is still locked within frozen legal decrees.

This work consists in describing the existing and actual activity of podiatrists despite the words in the legislative decrees. The objective is to improve education, to obtain complementary rights of exercise and acts and assure these are registered in the Law. Presently, the profession depends on the national State, but ultimately, the work should lead the profession to the European education and teaching system... It is an entrance to the European LMD system: license master and doctorate, a road to a better harmonization of practices within Europe and the possibility of developing Research.

### **Continuing professional development**

Entering the profession, the new podiatrist swears on his honor that he will respect the deontological Code during his entire professional life!

Article 38 of this Code states that *“all podiatrists must maintain and perfect his knowledge in particular by participating in continuous training initiatives and in actions of professional practice assessment such as planned in the article L. 4382-1.”*

In France the law made continuing professional education for medical and paramedical professions compulsory. Its purpose is the perfection of the knowledge and the improvement of the quality of care. The obligation of training is satisfied in particular by every possible means and allows for the evaluate of skills and professional practices.

The conditions of implementation of this continuing professional education should have been fixed by a state decree. Yet, paramedical professions, thus podiatrists are still waiting for this decree to be published.

At present time, training is the practitioner's individual and voluntary choice. Many have already made this choice; podiatrists believe in the maintenance and continuing development of their skills and knowledge and insure the best podiatric care.

As proof, in September 2008, ONPP was signing a Convention with The Haute Autorité de santé (HAS) - or French National Authority for Health- in order to implement a new quality procedure: the evaluation of the professional practices - a procedure which is mandatory for doctors but not yet for paramedical practitioners. Since then, more than twenty “regional facilitators” were trained to this assessment methodology and where spread out across the country to help podiatrists

implement this initiative in continuous quality development. ONPP is very proud to announce that in only a few months, more than 1000 practitioners were volunteers for this new approach!

In the mean time, the government published a law last summer – the HPST Law – Hospital, patients, health and territories, reforming the training system and giving place to the **continuous professional development** including together continuous education and analysis of professional practices. Organization, modalities and financing are once more defined by the Law. The texts are expected very soon but one can be sure this time that all health professionals: medical and paramedical, with or without an Order, will have no choice but accomplishing their annual training!

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