

Podiatrist, Chiroprody: **What's the difference?**

When it comes to foot-care professionals, a strange and not entirely logical divide exists in Ontario. There are podiatrists and there are chiropractors. The College of Chiropractors of Ontario is the official licensing body for both groups.

Chiroprody training means a three-year post-graduate diploma, offered at The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences, in downtown Toronto. Podiatrists must complete a four-year post-graduate degree in podiatric medicine and up to three years of hospital-based surgical residency. The only podiatric training available in Canada is in Quebec, conducted in French; most Ontario podiatrists trained in the U.S.

In 1993 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care decreed that no new podiatrists would be licensed to operate in Ontario; the province would move exclusively

toward the chiropractor model of foot care. Practicing podiatrists, however, were allowed to continue under a "grandfather clause."

The rationale seems to be a mixture of history and expediency, but it has led to some puzzling anomalies. Podiatrists are allowed to diagnose; chiropractors are not. Podiatrists are permitted to perform soft-tissue and bone surgery; chiropractors can only cut into soft tissue. Podiatrists are allowed (limited) billing of OHIP; chiropractors are not.

In restricting the licensing of the more highly qualified foot-care professionals, the ministry was relying on orthopaedic surgeons to pick up the slack. However, the waiting list for orthopaedic procedures is prodigious; and their hospital-based surgery, generally performed under full anaesthetic, is far more traumatic than the

minimally invasive techniques practiced by modern podiatrists in their offices.

According to Andrew Morrison, a spokesperson for the ministry, the 1993 decision will be reviewed in 2014.

