

State Medical Board of Ohio

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Dear ██████████:

This letter is in response to your inquiry as to whether the peroneal nerve decompression procedure is within the scope of practice of podiatry. You indicate concern given that two of the incision sites for the procedure are above the ankle.

On September 12, 2007, the State Medical Board of Ohio approved the determination that an Ohio podiatric physician who has successfully completed appropriate training may perform peroneal nerve decompression for the relief of foot and ankle pathologies, such as diabetic neuropathy, when the procedure is medically appropriate. As with all surgical procedures, the podiatric physician must perform the peroneal nerve decompression procedure in conformance with the minimal standard of care of similar practitioners under the same or similar circumstances. The determination is based upon the following analysis:

The scope of practice of podiatry in Ohio is defined in Section 4731.51, Ohio Revised Code, to include the following:

- ❖ The medical, mechanical, and surgical treatment of ailments of the foot, the muscles and tendons of the leg governing the functions of the foot;
- ❖ The use of such preparations, medicines, and drugs as may be necessary for the treatment of such ailments; and
- ❖ Treatment of local manifestations of systemic diseases as they appear in the hand and foot, but the patient must be concurrently referred to a medical or osteopathic physician for treatment of systemic disease itself.

Available literature indicates that peroneal nerve decompression is a surgical procedure used to release the entrapped common peroneal nerve for purposes that include the relief of symptoms of diabetic neuropathy in the foot. The procedure was pioneered by A. Lee Dellon, M.D., and is often referred to as the Dellon Procedure. The Dellon Procedure releases the tibial, deep peroneal, and common peroneal nerves. According to information obtained from the website of the Dellon Institute for Peripheral Nerve Surgery, www.dellon.com, the surgical treatment of peroneal nerve compression requires that an incision be made over the neck of the fibula, with

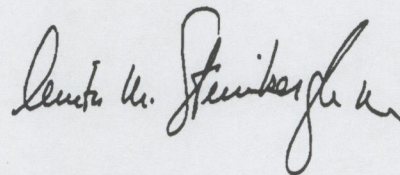
the fascia surrounding the nerves to the lateral side of the leg being released. Information from the website states that for the surgical treatment of deep peroneal nerve compression, a ligament from the extensor digitorum brevis is released. Information from the website also states that for tarsal tunnels syndrome, the procedure requires an incision made about four inches long, inside the ankle. While the performance of the procedure requires the application of basic surgical principles, the surgeon must also be specially trained in the peroneal nerve decompression procedure. The training is generally available to medical physicians, osteopathic physicians, and podiatric physicians. Proponents of the peroneal nerve decompression procedure cite its success in reducing symptoms of diabetic neuropathy for patients who are identified as having a nerve compression.

Podiatric medical education and training encompasses the anatomy of the leg and the application of basic surgical principles in the treatment of local manifestations of systemic disease. Because the scope of practice of podiatry in Ohio includes the surgical treatment of local manifestations of systemic diseases as they appear in the hand and foot, Ohio podiatric physicians play a significant role in the delivery of medical services, including surgical services, for the treatment of foot and ankle pathologies such as diabetic neuropathy. While the peroneal nerve decompression procedure is generally not included in podiatric education and training, training in the procedure is available to podiatric physicians. Accordingly, an Ohio podiatric physician who has successfully completed appropriate training may perform peroneal nerve decompression for the relief of foot and ankle pathologies, such as diabetic neuropathy, when the procedure is medically appropriate. As with all surgical procedures, the podiatric physician must perform the procedure in conformance with the minimal standard of care of similar practitioners under the same or similar circumstances.

Thank you for your inquiry. The Board welcomes comments and inquiries relevant to the practice of podiatry in Ohio. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sallie Debolt, Executive Staff Attorney, at (614) 644-7021.

This letter is only a guideline and should not be interpreted as being all inclusive or exclusive. The Board will review all possible violations of the Medical Practices Act and/or rules promulgated there under on a case by case basis.

Sincerely,



Anita M. Steinbergh, D.O.
Chair
Scope of Practice Committee

4731.51 Defining practice of podiatric medicine and surgery.

The practice of podiatric medicine and surgery consists of the medical, mechanical, and surgical treatment of ailments of the foot, the muscles and tendons of the leg governing the functions of the foot; and superficial lesions of the hand other than those associated with trauma. Podiatrists are permitted the use of such preparations, medicines, and drugs as may be necessary for the treatment of such ailments. The podiatrist may treat the local manifestations of systemic diseases as they appear in the hand and foot, but the patient shall be concurrently referred to a doctor of medicine or a doctor of osteopathic medicine and surgery for the treatment of the systemic disease itself. General anaesthetics may be used under this section only in colleges of podiatric medicine and surgery approved by the medical board pursuant to section 4731.53 of the Revised Code and in hospitals approved by the joint commission on the accreditation of hospitals, or the American osteopathic association. The use of x-ray or radium for therapeutic purposes is not permitted.

Effective Date: 04-10-2001