

# State Medical Board of Ohio

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██████████, D.P.M.

Via e-mail to ██████████

Dear Dr. ██████████:

This letter is in response to your inquiry concerning whether split thickness skin grafts harvested from the anterior thigh is within the scope of practice of podiatry in Ohio. You state that you recently treated two patients for whom skin grafts from the lower extremities were not possible: a patient whose chronic ulcer of the calf was ready for skin grafting and a patient who needed wide excision, a frozen section, and subsequent grafting. You also state that at you have been trained in harvesting a skin graft from the thigh.

On September 12, 2007, the State Medical Board of Ohio approved the Scope of Practice Committee's determination that an appropriately trained podiatric physician may perform split thickness skin grafts whereby skin is harvested from the anterior thigh for grafting to an area below the knee when the procedure is medically appropriate for the treatment of foot and ankle pathologies. As with all surgical procedures, the podiatric physician must perform the split-thickness skin graft 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:

A split thickness skin graft involves harvesting a relatively large area of the dermis and a portion of the epidermis from a donor site and transplanting it to another site. The skin harvesting is usually performed with the use of a manually powered or air or electric-powered dermatome or freehand with a knife. The split thickness donor site is usually a location that is easily concealed, such as the thigh or buttock, which are areas above the knee.

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 the systematic disease itself.

Further, Rule 4731-20-01, Ohio Administrative Code, defines the foot to include the ankle. Rule 4731-20-02, Ohio Administrative Code, clarifies that a podiatrist who meets specific requirements may perform surgery on the ankle joint. Therefore, the practice of podiatry in Ohio includes the surgical treatment of ailments of the foot, ankle, and muscles and tendons of the leg governing the functions of the foot.

Podiatric physicians play a significant role in the delivery of medical services for the treatment of foot and ankle pathologies, especially for diabetic wound care. It is clear that the medical services a podiatric physician may perform include, as medically appropriate, the treatment of foot and ankle pathologies through a skin graft for which the donor site is below the knee.

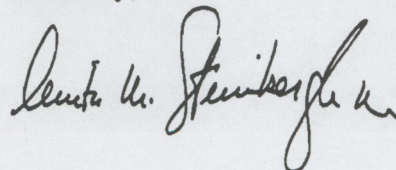
In the situation you pose, the dimensions of the below-the-knee wound being treated requires a graft larger than that obtainable from a body area below the knee. A split thickness skin graft from an area above the knee, such as the anterior thigh, would be necessary to obtain sufficient skin for the appropriate treatment of the wound.

The Medical Board understands that the performance of split thickness skin grafts has been a component of podiatric training for several years. Moreover, hospitals have, on a case-to-case basis, credentialed podiatric physicians to perform split thickness skin grafts from body areas above the knee. Finally, the required expertise to perform the spit thickness skin graft is not dependent upon the site of the donor area because the same surgical skills and principles must be applied whether the donor site is above or below the knee. Accordingly, an appropriately trained podiatric physician may perform split thickness skin grafts whereby skin is harvested from the anterior thigh for grafting to an area below the knee when the procedure is medically appropriate for the treatment of foot and ankle pathologies. As with all surgical procedures, the podiatric physician must perform the split-thickness skin graft in conformance with the minimal standard of care of similar practitioners under the same or similar circumstances.

Thank you for your inquiry. The Medical 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

## **4731-20-01 Definition of foot.**

(A) "Foot", as used in section 4731.51 of the Revised Code, is defined as the terminal appendage of the lower extremity and includes the ankle joint which consists of the tibial plafond, its posterolateral border (posterior malleolus), the medial malleolus, distal fibula (lateral malleolus) and the talus.

HISTORY: Eff 1-30-97; 2-28-04

Rule promulgated under: RC 119.03

Rule authorized by: RC 4731.05

Rule amplifies: RC 4731.22, 4731.51, 4731.61

RC 119.032 rule review dates: 11/17/03, 3/25/07