The Need for Podiatric Care

As the risk of foot abnormalities increases with age, proper podiatric care becomes increasingly important. Factors which contribute to this risk include:

- Structural foot changes over time leading to corns and callouses. This is usually associated with joint degeneration.
- Systemic disorders such as arthritis, peripheral vascular disease and various medications may directly affect foot health.
- Many older people struggle to properly care for their feet due to poor vision and reduced mobility. Additionally, nails become deformed and thickened over time, increasing the difficulty of foot care.
- High Risk Foot affects around 13% of people with diabetes in New Zealand (The Prevalence of Diabetic Foot Disease in the Waikato Region; Lawrenson, O'Shea, McClintock, 2015). Diabetes and associated peripheral vascular disease increase the risk of foot pathology requiring specialist foot care.

The benefits of proper foot care for the elderly include improved mobility and independence, with a reduced likelihood of hospitalisation.

Obligations of Aged Care Providers

All residents must have access to foot care. Unless a medical practitioner has prescribed care by a podiatrist, foot care can be provided by an unregulated person. The residents will need to fund this activity.

If a medical practitioner prescribes care by a health care professional, this care must be provided by a registered podiatrist and paid for by the aged care facility.

Role of the Podiatrist

Podiatrists may provide the following services to aged care residents:

- Assessment and recommendations regarding foot care requirements and care plans for individual residents.
- Management and treatment of foot pathology.
- Treatment of high risk foot problems.
- Advice to staff about non-pathological foot care (nail trimming and foot hygiene) and training staff to identify and manage individuals at risk of foot pathology.
- Prescription foot orthoses, insoles or the fitting and modification of footwear to allow pain-free mobility and prevent corns, callouses and ulceration.

Unless you have entered into a contract with an Aged Care Provider, please do not provide your annual practicing certificate.