



Standard of Care *by Lisa Sullivan, DPM, Board President, Colorado Podiatry Board*

When we think of standard of care issues, we always think about the services we provide. However, we often overlook a more all-encompassing aspect—communication. Lack of effective communication is responsible for many complaints that come before the Board.

Not only is good communication a good practice builder and important in achieving patient satisfaction, it is imperative in the quality of care patients receive.

Communication complaints often present themselves as obvious problems involving:

- inattentive office personnel;
- the systems we have in place to relay information within our offices, including calling or contacting a PCP or specialist;
- the podiatrist themselves not listening;
- the cleanliness of the office space, which reflects on professionalism.

These issues can often be corrected by closer attention to standard office procedures within your practice and involving your staff.

There are other communication issues that generate regular complaints to the Board:

- incomplete medical records;
- failure to provide timely release of medical records;
- incomplete consent forms. Patients are entitled to know not only the names of the procedure or procedures being performed but—in layman's terms—what you will be doing. For example, if you are doing an arthroplasty, is it important to tell that patient you will be removing bone and the possible sequelae of that particular procedure. Informed consent also involves a discussion of risks, complications and alternatives. These issues need to be communicated in oral and written format. By doing so, you can decrease the likelihood of having a complaint filed with the Board.

Communication is an area of a practice where practitioners can get complacent. Complacency is not what the public deserves. By honing your communication skills, you are better able to keep everyone on the same page, for the betterment of the patient. Clear and effective communication in your practice as a podiatrist is part of the standard of care the Board expects of its licensees.

Beginning January 2007, the Division of Registrations instituted an Online Renewal for all professional licenses. Approximately six (6) weeks prior to the expiration date of your license, you will receive a letter in the mail with instructions.

Benefits of Renewing Online

- **It is fast.** When you renew online, your renewal information is transmitted to the Division immediately and you should receive your new license **within 2 weeks**. Previously, when you renewed by mail, it took up to **4 weeks** for your renewal application to be processed.
- **You can pay with a credit or debit card.** After making your online payment, you can even print a payment confirmation page. Previously, when you renewed by mail, you could only pay by check or money order and no payment confirmation was available.
- **It is convenient.** Renew your license anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **It is secure.** We take your privacy and security seriously. Registrations Online Services uses the most up-to-date security technology to keep your confidential information secure.

Practicing on a Lapsed License

Practicing on a lapsed license is a violation of the Podiatry Practice Act and a reportable disciplinary action.

If you inadvertently allowed your license to lapse at the most recent renewal date, and you are continuing to practice, you are doing so in violation of the Podiatry Practice Act. Further, your malpractice insurance carrier may not cover you during the period in which your license is lapsed. You should immediately cease practicing

until your license has been reinstated to an active status.

Colorado law and Board Policy 20-3 allows podiatrists a 60-day extension (grace period) in which to complete the renewal process before licenses are lapsed. If you renew during this grace period, you are subject to an additional \$15 late fee. All licenses remain active during the grace period and renewing your license during the grace period is NOT a violation of the Podiatry Practice Act.

If you have been practicing on a lapsed license and wish to reinstate your license, please contact Jan Seewald:

jan.seewald@dora.state.co.us

You may download a copy of the reinstatement application, as well as review the complete set of Board rules, Board policies, and the Podiatry Practice Act on our website:

www.dora.state.co.us/podiatrists

BOARD ACTIONS

January—December 2006

The Board maintains a list of Board actions taken by the Colorado State Podiatry Board for previous years on its website at www.dora.state.co.us/podiatrists. Documentation of Board actions may also be obtained from the Internet at www.dora.state.co.us/doraimages, or by sending a written request to Susan Carroll at the Podiatry Board address, via e-mail (susan.carroll@dora.state.co.us), or by phone at (303) 894-7720.

Board Action Definitions

The following Board action definitions are provided to assist you reviewing the information provided.

Letter of Admonition: A public reprimand issued to the podiatrist in the form of an actual letter or as part of a Stipulation. The letter or Stipulation is a public record and may be obtained from the Board office.

Stipulation and Final Agency Order: An order of the Board and an agreement between the Board and the podiatrist prior to a formal hearing. A stipulation resolves the case. In a stipulation, both parties agree to facts, sanctions and the terms and conditions for continued practice, if applicable.

Final Board Order: Final order issued by the Board after a formal hearing before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) where evidence and testimony were presented. The ALJ prepares a written report of the findings, which a Hearing Panel of the Board reviews and then makes the final ruling regarding the appropriate sanction.

Summary Suspension pursuant to 24-4-104(4), C.R.S. is an immediate, temporary withdrawal of the podiatrist's license to practice pending prompt commencement of formal disciplinary proceedings. This type of suspension can only be ordered when the Board finds the public health, safety or welfare requires emergency action or that the podiatrist has willfully violated the law.

Suspension pursuant to 12-32-108.3(11)(a), C.R.S. is a suspension of a podiatrist's license for failure to comply with a Board order to submit to a physical or mental examination.

The following list does not represent all Board actions. Absent from this list are applicants denied initial licensure or reinstatement either before or after a hearing. The city listed is derived from the designated mailing address on file with the Board, and may not reflect the current city of practice.

Non-Disciplinary Actions

Richard Charles, D.P.M., Denver, CO License #345 DOB 05/31/53 Action Date: 03/30/06
Outcome: On March 30, 2006, the Podiatry Board approved a Stipulation for Interim Cessation of Practice effective on that date. The Stipulation is open for public inspection and reported as required by law. This is not a disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Actions

Christopher O. Cook, D.P.M., Montrose, CO License #628 DOB 02/17/70 Action Date: 3/17/06
Outcome: Letter of Admonition.

Terry L. Oehler, D.P.M., Lakewood, CO License #579 DOB 10/26/71
On June 27, 2006, the Podiatry Board approved a Stipulation and Final Agency Order for Dr. Oehler that includes probation, abstinence from addictive substances, treatment monitoring and practice monitoring. The order is open for public inspection and reported as required by law.

Joseph E. Mechanik, D.P.M., Lakewood, CO License #527 DOB 01/02/70
On September 1, 2006, the Podiatry Board approved a Stipulation and Final Agency Order for Dr. Mechanik that includes probation, an education plan and practice monitoring. The order is open for public inspection and reported as required by law.