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Podiatry in BC – Get a Foot in the Door!

- by Neal McKenna

Here's a chance to get a foot in the door – podiatrists in BC are very much in demand! An aging population and increased participation in fast-paced sports ensure that demand will continue for a long time to come. As a matter of fact, 50 of Canada's 200 podiatrists practice in British Columbia!

Today, much of podiatry involves *podogeriatrics*, the treatment of lower extremity disorders. Those ubiquitous baby boomers, one quarter of BC's population, continue to advance into middle age. With middle age, foot ailments increase dramatically.

Another specialty area which is expected to see considerable growth is podiatric sports medicine, which involves the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lower extremity disorders in athletes.

Dr. Richard Snowsell, of the Kelowna Podiatry Group says: "Podiatry is a focused, hands-on endeavour directly involving the patient, and generally, there are few prescriptions to write. ...The profession serves a very specific clinical need. With more people into jogging, exercising, walking and overall increased activities, more strain is being placed on the feet and lower limbs. This has created a whole new specialization in biomechanics and sports medicine." Snowsell continues: "...And thanks to the baby

boomers, a growing need for podiatrists will continue well into the next century.”

Anyone wanting to become a podiatrist must have four years of Pre-Med, four years of Podiatry, and in BC, a one year residency to become licensed. It’s a long haul and since there are no podiatric medical schools in Canada, you will have to study podiatry in the United States. Again competition is stiff, there are just seven podiatric medical schools in all of the United States. That means tuitions are high and the course load is heavy.

According to Work Futures BC, the average annual salary for podiatrists is slightly more than \$80,000.00. Although, depending on where they practice, about 40% of Canadian podiatrists earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000 each year. While some podiatrists are employed by hospitals, the majority are in private practice.

Another plus is, podiatrists have regular hours. “You don’t have to rush to the hospital at 3:00 in the morning and you don’t have to deal with death,” Snowsell says. “...You don’t ever have to tell a family that someone they love has died. I think it’s an immensely more positive lifestyle.”