

AUT

A FUTURE IN
PODIATRY





WHAT IS PODIATRY?

Podiatry is the specialised diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injury, disease and conditions to the foot, ankle and lower limb. An essential part of people's overall health, podiatrists work with people of all ages to manage conditions ranging from sports injuries, orthotic therapy and improvement of walking and running style, to diabetic complications, arthritic problems and general foot conditions. Nail and skin surgery is also part of podiatry.

If you have a strong interest in health, movement and non-surgical and surgical treatment of the leg and foot, are a problem solver and a good listener with the ability to communicate with a diverse range of people, then podiatry may be a great career for you. There are approximately 500 qualified, registered podiatrists in New Zealand with annual practising certificates. AUT offers the only podiatry degree in Aotearoa New Zealand.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS IN PODIATRY

As our aged population continues to rapidly increase, so does the incidence of foot problems particularly in those with diabetes and arthritis. A growth area in podiatry includes the assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation of long-term foot conditions.

Increasingly, podiatrists are working within multidisciplinary teams rather than as stand alone practitioners, which means they are integrating more with other health professionals such as GPs and physiotherapists.

The general population's growing interest in living a more active lifestyle has emphasised the importance of foot health needs and education.

There is a shortage of podiatrists in the South Island and rural areas.

Two thirds of podiatrists are self-employed. Many start up their own business once they have had some experience.

There is an increase in students and practitioners undertaking postgraduate study to research and specialise in a specific aspect of podiatry. Postgraduate study opens up opportunities to enter tertiary educator and/or research roles.

A number of podiatrist graduates find work with large private podiatry businesses and in the public health sector in Australia, the UK and Singapore.

Gaining overseas experience is an important part of growth and development for podiatrists. Australia has an abundance of large private practices wanting to employ New Zealand podiatry graduates, providing many opportunities for advancement of skills and knowledge.

UNIQUE TO AUT

AUT is the only university offering podiatry in New Zealand. AUT graduates can register with the Podiatrists Board of NZ under the general scope of podiatrist because they complete 1,000 clinical hours during their degree.

This degree is accredited by the Podiatrists Board of New Zealand.



WORK SETTINGS

Graduate podiatrists usually start working for someone in private practice, set up their own private practice, or work for Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora.

Private practice as an employee

You may start within a general practice employed by a more experienced podiatrist. You would work with clients of all ages, dealing with a range of conditions affecting the lower foot and limb.

Self employed private practice

You can buy into a pre-existing practice or set up your own practice alongside other health professionals. Typically, to set up practice, a podiatrist needs to purchase assessment equipment (eg for vascular, neurological and musculoskeletal conditions), instruments for nail and skin conditions and an autoclave for infection control. You also need to develop strong communication and marketing skills with other health professionals in the area to pick up referrals. It usually takes three to four years to get established to a point where you are able to employ others. At that point you may start to specialise.

Public health podiatrist

You are employed by Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora (government funded). Commonly you'd work in diabetes management, including health promotion and wellbeing, formulating and implementing patient self-management plans and assisting in health navigation. You could also be involved in rheumatology clinics where you work within a multidisciplinary team monitoring the health status, wound care management and plantar pressure analysis of patients.

CAREER EXAMPLES

Private Practice Podiatrist: Help people with any health issues involving pain from hip to foot, including injuries of heels, shins, knees and hips. Do minor surgery, such as ingrown nail and wart removal. Advise on footwear and provide gait re-training, improving walking and running styles. Use orthotics to alter how the foot functions, with the goal of reducing injuries. Work with a range of people, from elite athletes to older people.

Diabetes Podiatrist: Work in a team to provide comprehensive podiatry screening and treatment, education and advice for people with diabetes, particularly those with visual and mobility problems preventing self-care of their feet. Use skills in diabetes podiatry and infection control practice. Includes education of clients, families and health professionals of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Sport Podiatrist: Work with other podiatrists or health professionals, or on your own, assessing and managing a range of musculoskeletal conditions affecting the lower limb. Develop individual treatment and rehabilitation plans to get sports people back onto the sports field as soon as possible.

SALARIES

Private sector salaries vary, depending on the size and location of the employer. Public sector salaries are less variable.

	Salary (per year)
Private practice	New graduate: \$60,000–\$75,000 Senior podiatrist: \$85,000+ Podiatrists with established practices: \$100,000+
Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora	New graduate: \$70,000–\$80,000 Senior podiatrists: \$100,000–\$116,000 Leadership roles: \$120,000+

Source: Podiatry NZ 2024, Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora.

Keep up to date with podiatrist salary data by visiting these websites:

SEEK

seek.co.nz/career-advice/role/podiatrist/salary

Careers NZ

careers.govt.nz/jobs-database/health-and-community/health/podiatrist/



PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

- Podiatrists Board of New Zealand (professional registration)
- Podiatry New Zealand (professional association)

SKILLS REQUIRED

Podiatrists combine their ability to communicate and interact well with all age groups with their clinical knowledge of the foot and lower limb. Skills include:

- The effective use of orthotic and prosthetic devices for the foot and leg
- Conducting routine minor surgical procedures such as nail wedge resections and blunt dissection of verrucae
- Administration of local anaesthetic for minor surgical procedures
- Musculoskeletal techniques, including assessment and management of foot, ankle and knee injuries, and advice regarding footwear and the prescription of foot orthoses
- Palliative treatment skills, including nail care, treatment of dermatological conditions affecting the foot and removal of excessive callus
- Medical and surgical history documentation and clinical examination
- Use of effective problem solving and ability, based on research and clinical evidence, to identify the health needs of clients and find potential resources to meet those needs
- Ability to plan rehabilitation programmes that meet client needs and deliver safe, effective and ethical client management
- Confidence to actively contribute to health promotion and health education activities in the wider community

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Dexterous with fine motor skills
- Interested in delivering non-surgical and surgical treatment
- Effective listener and communicator in a variety of situations with people from a range of backgrounds
- Good at problem solving
- Strong time management skills
- Sound decision making ability

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Students may apply for the Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) at the completion of the third year. The honours programme is an additional one year of study in which students study a distinct area of research within podiatry. Previous students who have completed the programme have found clinical positions in private practice or have continued on the research pathway through master's and doctoral study.

LAUREN WANNENBURG

Podiatrist and Owner of Hobsonville Podiatry

Bachelor of Health Science (Podiatry)

“Every day I am challenged to think outside the square. While two patients may have the same injury or problem, everyone responds differently to treatment and what may work for one person may not necessarily work for another.

We are a general podiatry practice so I work with my clients on their gait (the way they walk), their muscle strength, foot positioning and shoe selection as well as referring clients to physiotherapists, occupational therapists, back to their GP or to orthopaedic surgeons if necessary.

Footwear is one of the most common things I need to educate clients about, discussing how shoes impact on achilles injury, bunions, forefoot pain, corns, ingrown toenails, etc.

I enjoy learning from the other health professionals at the clinic. We have six physiotherapists, one massage therapist and an acupuncturist. Each practitioner brings a slightly different view to the practice, as well as their own life experiences. It is great to be working amongst such a variety of people.

After graduating I worked at Big Foot Podiatry for 4½ years before deciding to set up my own business, Hobsonville Podiatry. I decided to start my own practice so I could shape it exactly how I wanted. When I first started the business I was the sole person involved in the day-to-day running of the practice – and that was sometimes a little overwhelming because there are so many tasks to juggle!

Over the past four years I’ve taken on help with administration that frees me up to work with patients and mentor and support the other two podiatrists that work for me. The mix of management and hands-on practice is really fulfilling.”

LAUREN’S TIPS TO GRADUATES

“Learn as much as you can about footwear! It makes a real difference to your practice if you have a good understanding of shoes: brands/models/styles – work boots, running shoes, hiking boots, training shoes etc.

You’re not done learning so keep your mind open and stay curious. There’s still so much to learn in the first few years after graduating. Try to find a good mentor to help guide you – it will make a big difference.”



USEFUL WEBSITES

Podiatrists Board of New Zealand

podiatristsboard.org.nz

Podiatry New Zealand

podnz.org

FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date podiatry information visit:


aut.ac.nz/podiatry-study

For other future career sheets visit:

aut.ac.nz/careersheets

EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS


For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through elab.aut.ac.nz/

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: aut.ac.nz/enquire

futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

 @FutureStudentsofAUT

CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

aut.ac.nz/enquire | studenthub@aut.ac.nz

NORTH CAMPUS

90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, Auckland

Connect with us now:

