

Leveraging Technology to Overcome Podiatric Market Challenges and Support Practice Growth

By Alex Ormond

Creating and sustaining a profitable podiatry practice is a challenge, often requiring a considerable investment of time and financial resources. Knowing how to allocate resources to maximize financial return and analyzing effectiveness for patients is a continuous learning cycle in today's healthcare environment.

Dr. Robert Warkala, Managing Partner of Cornerstone Foot & Ankle, meets this challenge head on by continuously innovating in terms of services offered and increased patient care. His practice, which offers a full spectrum of services from preventative care to surgery, was in a significant growth period and decided to invest in technology solutions to address some of the challenges they were facing. **MLS Laser Therapy** is one of the technologies that his practice added. As an in-demand, cash-based modality, MLS Laser Therapy can help podiatrists combat declining reimbursements and generate revenue by providing:

- A drug free, non-surgical option for pain management
- A quicker return to normal activities for surgical patients
- A differentiated treatment offering
- Increased patient satisfaction and referrals

Cornerstone Foot & Ankle's existing patient base immediately saw impacts on treatment of debilitating, chronic pain. The team was able to adopt laser protocols and successfully treat patients so quickly that they purchased a second laser after just one month. This allowed them to treat new and existing patients at multiple locations for any of the key conditions treatable by laser therapy such as:

- Plantar fasciitis
- Achilles tendonitis
- Neuropathy
- Tendon and ligament injuries
- Arthritis
- Post-op pain and inflammation

"What has surprised me the most is the immediate post-operation results. People are seeing less swelling and quicker recovery time. We are also prescribing fewer pain killers—numbers have gone way down. An operation that may have previously required 3-4 weeks of narcotics may require 1 week followed by only over-the-counter, anti-inflammatory medications making the entire process safer for patients," said Dr. Warkala.

New patients began independently seeking out Cornerstone Foot & Ankle far more often. In most cases,



Dr. Robert Warkala

the new patient base is looking for treatment of chronic conditions after visiting several doctors with no improvement. In other cases, patients are looking for a solution that allows them to avoid surgery. Their goal is simple: get back to a baseline in their lives and achieve pain-free activity.

Given the growing pressure on profit margins from the Affordable Care Act and lower reimbursement levels from many insurance providers, it is important for podiatry practices to find new ways to optimize their income with technologies that also provide a higher level of care for patients. "It can be frustrating to feel that we are providing excellent care year

"This new offering allows us to offer a high quality of care that is predictable, while increasing our bottom line."—Dr. Warkala.

over year, yet reimbursements are getting slashed. This new offering allows us to offer a high quality of care that is predictable, while increasing our bottom line," said Dr. Warkala.

In considering laser therapy for your practice, Dr. Warkala suggests careful thought around building an infrastructure. Doctors should consider:

- Identifying candidates by creating standards for patient screening to minimize risk and improve patient outcomes.
- Understand staffing needs and how to maintain doctor's time with a growing patient base. Cornerstone Foot & Ankle hired two laser technicians who quickly adapted and supported their doctors.
- Determine the value proposition of the laser therapy service and how you will educate patients on benefits.

With a strategic adoption internally and an immediate demand for the service, Dr. Warkala has truly seen the impact of this technology on many aspects of the practice, with the effective treatment of patients in chronic pain being the key advantage. If you're interested in growing your practice with MLS laser therapy, *contact Cutting Edge Laser Technologies by visiting www.CELasers.com or calling 800-889-4184.*



The MLS Laser