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PP9306/02/2013 (031276)

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# An Afternoon with Dr. Mark Reyneker



**T**HE HUMAN FOOT. It is such an essential part of the human anatomy, used for balancing, walking, running, hopping, jumping, skipping, dancing... you get the idea. But it is hardly spoken about, except maybe in how they look aesthetically and not how they function!

A check with Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)) tells us that "the human foot and ankle is a strong and complex mechanical structure containing more than 26 bones, 33 joints (20 of which are actively articulated), and more than a hundred muscles, tendons, and ligaments." And yet, it is more often than not neglected and taken for granted.

I met Dr. Mark Reyneker recently and found him to be extremely knowledgeable, sincere, and completely passionate about feet! Hailing from South Africa, Dr. Mark (as he is fondly referred to by his patients) practiced in South Africa before being lured to Asia to redevelop a podiatry department in a centre in Singapore. Two years later, he came to Malaysia, where he founded the Family Podiatry Centre (FPC) in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail seven years ago. It is the only private podiatry centre

in Malaysia. Since opening, Dr. Mark and his team have treated over 50,000 feet.

So what is podiatry exactly? "Podiatry is that part of the medical field concerned with the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of conditions of the lower limb, paying special attention to the feet," explains Dr. Mark. "Fully 25% of all the bones in the human body are found in the foot, and together with numerous intricate joints, they carry your body weight around all day. Added to that, it has been the evolution of our feet that have given us the ability to walk upright and be bipedal – a trait that distinguishes us from the rest of the animal kingdom and is very likely responsible for our survival as a species."

Podiatrists consider themselves to be very much part of mainstream healthcare. They utilize medical diagnostic tests, have prescription rights, and perform a variety of surgical procedures. Around the world, they practice in hospitals and other medical facilities, private or governmental. Podiatry has been around for a very long time: The Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association is 107 years old. However, podiatrists still consider their field to be rapidly evolving.

The FPC has become well-known for treating conditions of the lower limbs. "We have excelled particularly in the management of musculoskeletal disorders such as heel pain (plantar fasciitis), knee pain (runners knee) and lower back pain," Dr. Mark informs me. "Other types of typical problems involve developmental leg problems in children, and foot deformities."

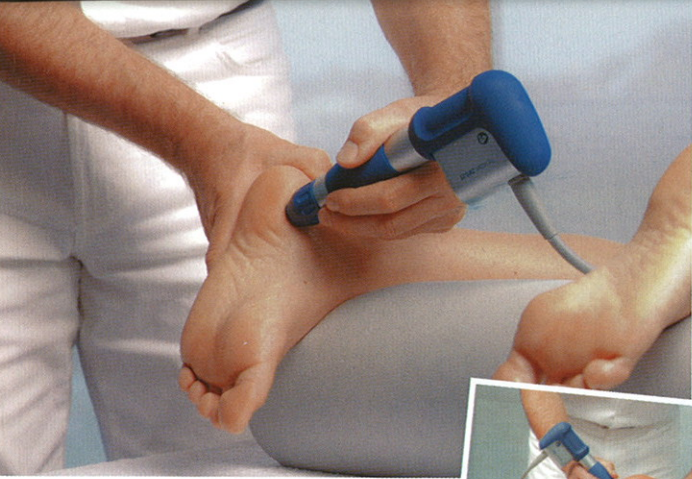
Patients who visit the FPC predominantly have chronic ailments. The reason for



this is that many doctors are misinformed about foot pain. Oftentimes, patients who consult them are sadly told that foot pain is a normal part of aging, or to wear arch support, change their shoes, and wear more cushions. Unfortunately, some patients get referred to shops that sell arch supports and shoes staffed by untrained individuals. So the patient ends up being "treated" in a shoe shop or kiosk for a medical condition. By the time they reach FPC, it is not uncommon for them to report having suffered for well over a year.

Besides Podiatrists, Dr. Mark has also hired Chiropractitioners and Physiotherapists in his centres. "My experience over the years has shown that a multidisciplinary approach to certain conditions is often times the best approach," he explains. "There are many cases such as chronic lower back pain that have causes that only a podiatrist will know how to identify. Then there are treatments that only a chiropractor will know how to administer effectively."

He continues, "There is also an important role for the physiotherapist to play. This example of teamwork is what makes our centre so successful. Dr. Barry Kluner, who is our chiropractor at the Mont Kiara branch, treats numerous conditions of the spine and gets his patients to lead healthier, more fulfilling lifestyles by addressing nutrition, rest, and fitness.



He is actively involved in helping people improve their posture with evidence based products and gives numerous international talks on the topic."

Dr. Mark has also recently added Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy (ESWT) to aid in the treatment of motion pain, such as Plantar Fasciitis, shoulder pain, tennis or golfer's elbow, Patellar tendonitis (jumper's knee), Achilles tendon pain, heel pain, or chronic neck, shoulder and back pain. This therapy can also treat muscle tension caused by painful muscular nodules (trigger points) and knee osteoarthritis. I learnt that the therapy is like a deep tissue massage but more than that, in how it is focused in sending pressure waves to the pain site. This therapy has apparently been used in numerous sporting events such as the Olympic Games and by leading sportsmen and teams to treat sports injuries besides pain.

"ESWT is a fascinating treatment," Dr. Mark shares enthusiastically. "It is evidence-based and FDA-approved. It is a typical example of physics taking medicine to new heights." He explains further, "The device that gets applied to the skin generates a low-energy sound wave. The sound wave penetrates deep into the area we are targeting and changes the pathology with almost immediate results. We have successfully used it on myogelosis (trigger points), which means that patients no longer need to get painful trigger point therapy, where the therapist will use his elbow or finger to press on the affected area, often leaving a patient battered and bruised. The feedback from patients has all been positive. ESWT has proven to be a valuable tool in our arsenal of treatments."

This was the treatment I wanted to have, as I have suffered from chronic neck and

lower back pain for months now. It's not debilitating pain, but it's ever-present, and I welcomed the chance to treat it.

And if the addition of ESWT wasn't enough, Dr. Mark will also be including yet another procedure to his practice – the CoolBreeze laser treatment of onychomycosis (toe nail fungus) and Verruca Warts. It seems many people do not actually realize that there is a treatment for toe nail fungus and the warts that grow on the soles of the feet or toes. These warts can sometimes cause pain. The CoolBreeze laser treatment will be the first of its kind in Malaysia.

What a worthwhile afternoon spent with Dr. Mark Reyneker. Not only did I learn a great deal about the human foot and its importance in our everyday activities, but I left with relief of the neck and back pain with which I had arrived, and am so grateful that I learned of this new treatment!

Dr. Mark's parting words of advice: "Pain is not normal if it persists for a few days. It is a warning signal, a red light, telling you that something is wrong. Listen to your body and respond by seeking help from the right professional." 📌

**The two Family Podiatry Centres are located in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail and Solaris Mont Kiara. Please go to <http://www.familypodiatry.com.my> for my information.**

