

# LIFE AFOOT FOR PIONEERING PODIATRIST

Like many ambitious young students, Lim Yuanshuang was on her way to studying medicine in hopes of becoming a medical doctor. During the journey, she found her true calling instead in the field of podiatric medicine.

Now the proud owner of her own podiatry clinic, FootDoctor Podiatry Clinic, Yuanshang shares with us her how she became one of the pioneering podiatrists in Malaysia.

“Podiatric medicine is the specialty of medical sciences that deals with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of foot and leg disorders.”

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## THE RIGHT FOOT FORWARD

### HOW DID YOU DISCOVER PODIATRY?

During my pre-university studies, most of my friends wanted to do medicine. Since I was interested in biology, that's what I planned to do too.

When it was time to apply to university, I came across the University of Western Australia and was instantly attracted to the beautiful campus. I began to explore the other healthcare courses available and that's how I discovered podiatry.

Upon doing some research on podiatry as a career in Malaysia, I found that there were only 2 other podiatrists practicing in Malaysia, and both were non-Malaysians. I reached out to one of them, Brendan Bergin who is an Australian working in Malaysia, for career advice. He was very encouraging and explained that podiatry is a wonderful career for those who truly enjoy the work.

### WAS YOUR FAMILY ALWAYS SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR CAREER CHOICE?

It was hard for my father in the beginning, to accept the idea of podiatry. He was understandably concerned about my job prospects. After all, podiatry is still an unconventional career choice and a lesser known profession in Malaysia.

The big turning point came when I received a comment on my blog. I wrote a blog entry about my interest in podiatry, and someone had left a comment asking whether I was a podiatrist, because she was looking for one!

I took it as a sign that there is a demand for podiatrists in Malaysia. Seeing my determination, my father finally gave his blessing and supported my decision to pursue my career of choice.





# THE ART OF FOOTWORK

## WHAT IS IT ABOUT PODIATRY THAT INTERESTS YOU?

I have always loved anatomy, it is fascinating to learn about how our bones and muscles work together.

That said, one of the biggest factors that made me choose podiatry over medicine was that I preferred a healthcare career that would focus more on conservative treatment and inducing less pain to my patients.

I lost my mom when I was in my final year of university. She suffered severe endometriosis for 10 years before she passed on. During those 10 years, I accompanied her as she underwent many surgeries, each surgery lasting 10 to 12 hours. She was in a lot of pain and it took months for her to recover from each surgery.

With podiatry, most of my patient's foot problems can be relieved after treatment.

In the end, I have no regrets because I enjoy what I do. My career in podiatry thus far has been everything I expected it to be.

## FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO AREN'T FAMILIAR WITH PODIATRY, CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SERVICES OFFERED BY A PODIATRIST?

There are 3 main groups of foot problems podiatrists can treat:

**CONDITIONS OF FOOT SKIN AND NAILS.** These include corns, warts, and ingrown nails.

**FOOT PAIN.** Some common causes of foot pain include sports injuries, heel pain from wearing ill-fitting shoes, and others. A podiatrist can help find the cause of one's foot pain, treat the injury responsible for the pain (if any), and recommend ways to avoid foot pain from recurring.

**FOOT PROBLEMS CAUSED BY DIABETES.** Podiatrists treat common foot problems in patients with diabetes, such as sores, ulcers, and calluses.

**ORTHOTICS.** Orthotics are custom-made padded inserts to be worn inside the shoes. Orthotics can treat several foot problems, such as relieving pressure points in the feet to alleviate foot pain.





## WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF BEING A PODIATRIST?

The biggest challenge is the lack of awareness on podiatry among Malaysians, even within the healthcare industry. Many people mistake podiatry for complementary medicine. Some even think we're professional reflexologists!

Podiatrists such as myself are actually part of allied health, a group of healthcare professionals that are involved in the identification, evaluation, and prevention of diseases and disorders. Allied healthcare professionals complement the efforts of doctors and nurses.

Hence, podiatry is a service based on medical science.

That said, I enjoy explaining podiatry to people that aren't familiar with it. I give educational talks about podiatry whenever the opportunity arises.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MEANS TO STAY HEALTHY?

I enjoy yoga. Yoga stretches and strengthens the muscles of the whole body, helpful in preventing stiffness in the bones and muscles. If you want to walk well during your old age, I'd recommend yoga.

## WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

I am currently based in Kuala Lumpur. There are many people in need of podiatry services, so I would love to expand my clinic to other cities, to give more people better access to such services.

## LASTLY, DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVOURITE FOOT CARE TIPS TO SHARE WITH READERS OF HEALTHTODAY?

**WEAR GOOD SHOES AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN.** The best types of shoes are closed shoes, with thick cushioning at the bottom to support your feet. A good example would be sport shoes, made with thick sponge material that covers the entire foot. It's best to wear sport shoes if you'll be on your feet for long hours.

**WHEN BUYING SHOES, TRY THEM ON TO MAKE SURE THEY FIT WELL.** Avoid buying shoes that are too tight or too loose, as these will be uncomfortable and can hurt your feet if worn long-term.

**TRY NOT TO WEAR FLIP FLOPS OR SANDALS UNLESS YOU'RE GOING TO THE BEACH.** These shoes don't provide adequate support and comfort for your feet if you're going out for long hours.

