

WITHER MINIMALLY INVASIVE FOOT SURGERY

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While preparing for a seminar in minimally invasive foot surgery, I went on Amazon and searched "minimally invasive surgery" To my surprise, there were 6059 books on the subject. Subject matter ran the gamut of every imaginable medical field ranging from abdominal, spine, cardiac, colorectal, thoracic, bariatric, dental, plastic, gynecological, brain, cardiac, vascular, and orthopedic, etc. And those were only on the first two search pages. I then searched minimally invasive foot and ankle surgery and there were basically 4 books in print that deal with the subject, all written by orthopedic surgeons.

So the logical question I believe as podiatrists we should be asking ourselves is why is there such controversy in our profession about minimal invasive foot surgery when minimally invasive techniques are the accepted standard of care in almost every other field of surgery. Furthermore, another question should be why is minimally invasive foot surgery considered an accepted standard of care throughout the rest of the world with thousands of successful cases being performed every day while still being debated as an accepted standard of care in this country. And finally, whether or not members of our profession choose to use these techniques in their own practice, why are the younger members of our profession not at least being exposed to it in our schools and residencies?

For some of us "elder" members of the profession who know the history of MIS, the answer is well known. Though MIS grew out of a desire by a group of innovators to perform foot surgery with less trauma and disability to our patients, the perception, some justified and some not, by the pioneer open surgeons of our profession in the 60's and 70's was that the MIS surgeons were a group of untrained surgeons not receiving proper training and unable to acquire hospital privileges, but still desiring to perform foot surgery. Furthermore, let's all be honest. In those days, us first generation of Podiatric surgeons all wanted to be Orthopedic surgeons (RD'S) and be accepted by the medical community, so whenever a new piece of hardware or radical procedure was introduced, we, including myself, all jumped on it.

Well in the words of the great Bob Dylan "The times they are a changing". In the 43 years I have been in practice, the medical profession has certainly changed. We now are concerned with providing our patients the best possible care with the least amount of disability while making the maximum efficient use of our time in order to receive fair compensation for our services. All this while not overutilizing and staying the confines of insurance companies perception of what is necessary for each patient's care.

I have heard some of the most well known practice management lecturers in our profession say that Podiatrists may be the best suited profession for the new health care laws, and I believe MIS surgery is a natural for the coming times. First, from purely an economic view, the surgery can be performed in an outpatient office or ASC setting eliminating the wasted non productive travel and waiting time that would be encountered in a hospital. The hardware cost, if desired to be used at all, is minimal.

