


# GET REAL

## Not Retail:

Who can you really trust in "retail?" Do you really want to put your health in the hands of a salesman?



To keep your traction, you might have to rethink your steps and see a Podiatrist



## GET REAL - NOT RETAIL.

It seems that everyone is getting into the arch support business. So where do you go to get the right orthotic devices for your feet? A shoe store? A sports equipment retailer? A magazine ad? Infomercial? Doctor???

I would like to thank you for allowing me to take a moment of your valuable time and tell you about how I am using arch support devices to treat flat foot deformity in my practice.

Arch supports are very common. I see them everywhere. The last podiatry conference that I attended, there were literally hundreds of representatives selling orthotics, and with all of these companies, I wondered how they all stayed in business. Well, the obvious answer is

that there are many people with flat feet that need these devices. In my 15 years of practice, I have had long-term experience with at least 10 different orthotic companies. Each company makes multiple styles of devices that control pronation and accommodate for metatarsal pain and heel pain. I would say that the average curious DPM would have tried at least 30 different styles of prefabricated and custom devices in a 20-year career.



### Foot Farm

As your child's foot grows, it needs support. If internal support is absent, then the right external support is essential.

In my fifteen years of practice, I have learned that orthotics are very different in terms of materials used to make the devices and how those materials are utilized. Even the techniques for casting, scanning or measuring an arch are different. So for a veteran DPM whose life and livelihood depends on making good choices for his patients, the importance of knowing what works is obvious and can mean the success or failure of a practice.

Early in my career, I like many doctors, tried to save money by going with manufacturers that offered the most reasonable price. This was, of course, a mistake. The savings often meant great sacrifice in fit and comfort.

I soon learned that certain devices worked much better than others for certain conditions. For example, a bicyclist needs to have very thin carbon fiber devices that will fit well in shoes. A runner with a thin heel needs a full length device so that there is no sliding in the shoe. A person with severe flat foot and dysfunction of the posterior tibial tendon does well with a high medial flange to control pronation without being rigid. Posting of the devices is also necessary.

The point I am trying to make is that there are a tremendous number of variables to consider when it comes to orthosis selection. The right workup and diagnosis can lead to the greatest improvement in symptoms. So how is it that so many retailers are finding success

in the orthosis business? The answer is that often; a little bit of something is better than nothing. In other words, if a person with foot pain gets relief with a prefabricated rubber device, then, in that person's mind, they have improved their pain, and that's all that is necessary.



The problem with this thinking is that the foot is not a static structure, it is dynamic. It carries your weight and it is always changing and compensating for something. Maybe the compensation is for posture, or body weight, or knee or leg position. Whatever the reason, if people knew that wearing certain shoes, insoles or arch supports over a long period of time could lead to increased pain and breakdown, they might not be so quick to settle on fashion, or settle for less than what they should have inside their shoes.

The retail model is not always the best. This is because a retailer will often select materials based on price and performance. This price and performance strategy is great for a clothing line or even automobiles, but not for a product that can so greatly affect your health.

Let me speak from personal experience:

After a few early years of experimenting with economic "cost performance" arch devices, I decided to research the most expensive orthotics in the world. These devices offered a patented technology that was used in airplanes to make the wings. The devices were made of a carbon fiber material that made for a very thin device that conformed well to the foot and demonstrated a unique ability to rebound and support the foot despite being very thin. Another unique thing about this company was that they required a particular casting method that utilized a suction vac to better conform the plaster casting to the foot. This created a very accurate replica of the arch but required some expertise on the part of the technician doing the casting. This company would not accept any other casting method and would reject any foam impression or other quicker method of casting.



So why am I telling you all of this? Well, because I found out that often you get what you pay for with or-

thotics. Sure, I paid more for these devices. But my patients absolutely LOVED THEM. What makes this argument even more compelling and convincing is that these devices lasted 10 years. An average of 8 years longer than most other devices. Even under the most extreme conditions, these devices held up and needed no repair or replacement.



So after 15 years of practice I have learned a thing or two about what is average and what works better. What I don't understand is why anyone would want to purchase orthotic devices from a sales person instead of a doctor. That is like buying your prescription eye glasses off a rotating rack. Aside from the obvious reasons above, there are others that are just as important to comprehend. For the sake of being complete, I have listed them below.

1. Doctors can diagnose clinically and use x-ray to see bone deformity and analyze structural characteristics. Salesmen can't do this very well.
2. Doctors can use vast experience with many DIFFER-

ENT orthotic companies, and without bias, the doctor can choose exactly the right device for a particular foot type and deformity. Salesmen know their product well enough to be completely biased by it. But how interested are they in putting a competitors product on your foot even if they know that it would work better for you?

3. Doctors can determine if there are problems being created by faulty footwear or devices that can lead to future biomechanical problems. Salesmen don't do diagnosis and they will tell you this.

The fact is that most "retail" orthotic stores spend a lot of money to get you to believe that their device is a cure all for all sorts of pain. They even use expensive infomercials to play on your emotions. They price their devices high and are very good at convincing you that they are worth the price.

GET REAL NOT RETAIL

FIND A CERTIFIED PODIATRIST THAT HAS ONLY ONE PROFESSIONAL BIAS

..... TO MAKE YOU BETTER.

THE VALUABLE FINAL PRODUCT AT FEET FOR LIFE IS :

HAPPY PATIENTS WITH HEALTHY FEET.

IN THE CASE OF PATIENTS WITH FLAT FOOT... THIS MEANS

HAPPY, EDUCATED PATIENTS WITH HEALTHY ARCHES.

Warmest Regards,

Dr. Michael Horwitz