

## Internet Resources for Foot and Ankle Care

In May 2004, a survey was given to 25 national physician leaders in the field of foot and ankle surgery. The primary question was, "Do you refer patients to the Internet for additional patient information on foot and ankle topics? If so, to which Web page?" Only 13 of the physicians referred their patients to the Internet. Six of them did not specify a particular site; the other seven all singled out the [www.aofas.org](http://www.aofas.org) site.

In providing patients with Internet information sources, critical assessment of Websites is needed. Some Web-based information does not meet the standards of editorial scrutiny and accuracy provided by the peer-review process. The following sites do provide good foot and ankle care information and have been rated from zero stars (low quality) to five stars (high) based on physician content, patient content, and ease of navigation.

**<http://www.footcaremd.com/>**

Physician content: ★★

Patient content: ★★★★★

Ease of navigation: ★★★★★

This is the patient education Website of the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society. It covers a broad spectrum of foot and ankle problems while providing patients with concise, basic information. The illustrations are of average quality, and there is a lack of additional references for patients desiring more information.

**<http://www.aofas.org/>**

Physician content: ★★★

Patient content: ★

Ease of navigation: ★★★★★

This is the official site of the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society. It provides free, searchable access to abstracts from AOFAS meetings from the last 5 years as well as a link to the Website of the journal *Foot & Ankle International*. There is a hotlink to [www.footcaremd.com](http://www.footcaremd.com) as well as links to information for medical students and patients on most major topics.

**<http://www.webmd.com>**

Physician content: ★

Patient content: ★★★★★

Ease of navigation: ★★★

This commercial site covers all medical subspecialties, focusing on patient education with basic information. A search for "foot and ankle" yielded more than a hundred

different patient education topics, ranging from fungal nail infections to ankle sprains. Information on ankle sprains included a definition of the injury and even a detailed description of the proper technique for applying an ankle compression wrap. Much of the information is geared toward patient self-help rather than a discussion of complex topics. Supplemental figures and diagrams are excellent. There are commercial links to online bookstores. Non-medical writers provide the content; however, this material is reviewed and edited by physicians and health care providers.

**<http://www.wheelsonline.com>**

Physician content: ★★★★★

Patient content: ★★★

Ease of navigation: ★★

This textbook Website sponsored by Duke University is intended for medical professionals. It reviews a large spectrum of orthopaedic topics and provides extensive links to radiographs, procedures, and illustrations. Listed under the subheading Foot are more than 80 topics, each with a one-page description of the entity and a few additional references. The reviews encompass epidemiology, etiology, radiology assessment, differential diagnosis, and treatment options. Despite the medical terminology, patients may understand some topics.

**<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org>**

Physician content: ★

Patient content: ★★★★★

Ease of navigation: ★★★

This is Your Orthopaedic Connection, the official patient information Website of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. The search engine links to fact sheets providing patient information, with coverage on a large number of foot and ankle topics. There are currently 139 search results for "foot" alone. This site is less directly intended for self-help than, for instance, WebMD, and it provides more information to educate patients on topics related to their care. Illustrations and diagrams are available. Educational information more appropriate for physicians is available on Orthopaedic Knowledge Online; access is limited to AAOS members and subscribers.

*Judith F. Baumbauer, MD*

*Selene G. Parekh, MD, MBA*

*Thomas Lee, MD*