

**Department of Defense Response to  
House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Inquiry Regarding  
the Role of Military Podiatrists**

House Report 114-102 for fiscal year 2016, page 159, directs the Secretary of Defense to brief the House Committee on Armed Services by July 1, 2016, on the utilization of podiatrists within the Military Health System.

House Report 114-102, page 159, which accompanies the NDAA for FY-2016, states the following regarding Military Doctors of Podiatric Medicine:

*“The committee understands that the role of podiatrists in the military has evolved as the profession itself has grown in size and training. The committee is aware that because of this, the clinical role of the podiatric surgeon may not fit within the Medical Service Corps, and that being in the Medical Service Corps may limit career progression and opportunities for leadership positions for podiatrists within the military services. Further, it is the committee’s understanding that deployments have offered limited opportunities for podiatrists to serve in leadership positions that would otherwise be restricted to members of the Medical Corps. To better understand the role and responsibilities of military podiatrists, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to brief the House Committee on Armed Services by July 1, 2016, on the utilization of podiatrists within the Military Health System.”*

In order to provide responses to the Committee’s concerns, and to help the Committee understand the roles and responsibilities of military podiatrists, ten questions were sent to the Services. Their responses appear below with a DoD summary, where appropriate.

Please note that the responses from the Services include the Podiatrists assigned to the National Capital Region Medical Directorate (which includes the Walter Reed Military Medical Center and the Ft. Belvoir Community Hospital.)

### **1. How many military podiatrists do you have?**

**Air Force Response:** The Air Force currently has 12 active duty Podiatrists.

**Army Response:** The FY 2019 authorized strength for the Army Podiatry (67G) AOC is 21 officers. The Objective Force Model allows for a total of 30 officers. The current strength of the 67G AOC is 27 Active Duty officers. Three of the 27 officers presently on active duty are in residency training.

**Navy Response:** 31 Active Duty Podiatrists and two additional Podiatrists in a training status for a total of 33 on board.

**DoD Total:** There are a total of 72 military podiatrists in DoD.

### **2. What is their rank structure?**

**Air Force Response:**

COLONEL: 1  
LT COLONEL: 4  
MAJOR: 5  
CAPTAIN: 2

**Army Response:**

COLONEL: 1  
LT COLONEL: 5  
MAJOR: 11  
CAPTAIN: 10

**Navy Response:**

COMMANDER: 6  
LT COMMANDER: 7  
LIEUTENANT: 20

**DoD Roll-up:**

**06 (CAPT/COL): 2**  
**05 (CDR/LTC): 15**  
**04 (LCDR/MAJ): 23**  
**03 (LT/Capt): 32**

### **3. How many years of service do they have?**

**Air Force Response:** Years of service range from <1 to 20 and average 10 years

**Army Response:** The years of service range from 1 to 27 years, with the average being 9.8 years.

**Navy Response:** Years of Service range from <1 to 24 years with an average of 6.3 years.

**DoD Average Years of Service:** 8 years

**4. What are their ages?**

**Air Force Response:** Age range is 34 to 54 years; the average is 44 years

**Army Response:** The ages range from 26 –53 years, with the average age being 38.4 years.

**Navy Response:** Ages range from 28 to 53, with an average of 37.4 years of age.

**DoD Average Age:** 38 years of age

**5. Which Corps do your military Podiatrist reside in?**

**Air Force Response:** Biomedical Sciences Corps (BSC)

**Army Response:** Medical Service Corps

**Navy Response:** Medical Service Corps

**6. Do you see the career progression and opportunities for leadership positions limited for podiatrist within your Service? Please provide justification for either yes or no.**

**Air Force Response:** Podiatrists are eligible for leadership positions, including those specific to the Biomedical Services Corps and those for whom all Corps are considered. Air Force podiatrists are eligible to command Medical Operations Squadrons, Medical Support Squadrons, Aerospace Medicine Squadrons and Medical Groups. Air Force podiatrists commonly lead podiatry and multidisciplinary orthopedic clinics at Air Force Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). Air Force Surgical Squadrons are designated for command by Medical Corps officers, which currently means podiatrists may not command a surgical squadron. The Surgeon General is directing a review of squadron command specifications, which will reassess this specification for Surgical Squadrons.

**Army Response:** No. Career progression as defined by DA PAM 600-4 (Army Medical Department Officer Development, and Career Management) for Podiatrist culminates as the Chief of Podiatry in a Medical Center and/or as the Consultant to the Army Surgeon General. Army Podiatrists currently have career progression opportunities to serve as Department Chiefs of Surgery and Orthopedics at the LTC and COL level. Additional developmental and broadening assignments are available to Army Podiatrists. Army Podiatrists are eligible to compete for key leadership positions such as the newly expanded deputy commander positions in a Military Treatment Facility (MTF), command assignments, and other strategic AMEDD Leadership positions provided they meet the unique requirements for those positions.

**Navy Response:** No. Career progression and leadership opportunities are available via the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer and Career Milestone opportunities. Podiatrists can screen for these positions along with other Medical Service Corps, Medical Corps, Dental Corps and Nurse Corps officers in Navy Medicine. These opportunities are for officer in charge positions at branch health clinics and executive medicine screening boards for commanding officer and executive officer positions at naval hospitals and health clinics. Podiatrists are primarily assigned to healthcare facilities in support of active duty beneficiaries, family members and retirees. More senior Podiatrists can compete for roles of Department Head and/or Director in larger facilities and have served in this capacity.

**7. How many podiatrists deploy into leadership positions that would otherwise be restricted to the Medical Corps (physicians)? If none, please explain why podiatrists aren't placed in leadership positions while deployed.**

**Air Force Response:** Air Force policy does not restrict podiatrists from commanding deployed Air Force medical units. Air Force podiatrists have not held deployed command positions recently, primarily due to the small size of the career field in the Air Force.

**Army Response:** None. Podiatrists have been deployed in clinical positions but command opportunities have been limited due to their clinical background in a mostly administrative corps. Command positions are often restricted to a specific corps. However, when Army podiatrists have deployed, they were appointed and served as the Chief of Surgical Services, Assistant Deputy Commander for Clinical Services (DCCS) or Interim/Acting DCCS due to their leadership skills and clinical acumen.

**Navy Response:** There are opportunities for Podiatrists to deploy in leadership positions if they are qualified at the time the mission is announced. There have been no restrictions on leadership positions for podiatrists as the requirements are commonly open to all medical department officers designators. Available leadership positions are filled with the best qualified to fill the position.

**8. What is the promotion potential of the military podiatrist to the ranks of O4, O5 and O6 in each of the Services?**

**Air Force Response:** Podiatrists are successful at promotion to every rank, with rates at or above the overall rate for the Biomedical Sciences Corps.

**Army Response:** The Army Podiatrist (67G) competes for promotion within the Medical Service Corps Competitive Category IAW the promotion board procedures and requirements outlined in DoDI 1320.14 (Subject: Commissioned Officer Promotion Program Procedures dated 11 Dec 2013). Podiatrists compete along with 21 other Medical Service Corps specialties for promotion. For FY15 Promotion Selection Boards, the Medical Service Corps' selection opportunity rate for those officers in the primary zone of consideration met the DOPMA standards (+/-10%) for promotion to MAJ, LTC, and COL. In FY15 the selection opportunity to MAJ was 74% for the MSC. Specifically for the 67Gs, there were no 67Gs in the primary zone and the 2 considered above zone were not selected. In FY15 the selection opportunity to LTC was 77% for the MSC. Specifically for the 67Gs, there were 2-67Gs in the primary zone. One primary zone and one above zone 67G was

selected. In FY15 the selection opportunity to COL was 52% for the MSC. Specifically for the 67Gs, there was 1-67G in the primary zone, 2-67Gs above zone, and none were selected; however the 67Gs were at 100% strength at COL (1-COL for 1- authorization). Overall, Podiatry is over strength at the MAJ (183%) and at 100% strength at LTC and COL. Despite a limited force structure and limited space to promote to within the specialty, historical promotions for 67Gs have beengood.

**Navy Response:** Podiatrists compete for rank against the other 31 Navy MSC specialties. Officers selected for promotion are selected based solely on sustained superior performance and it is not related to the size or current staffing/ranking of the specialty. As of March 2015 the five year promotion rate for Podiatrists was:

- 18/19 promoted from O-3 to O-4 for 95%
- 9/17 promoted from O-4 to O-5 for 53%
- 0/5 promoted from O5-O-6 for 0%

**9. Are there dedicated deployment positions for podiatrists in your Service?**

**Air Force Response: No**

**Army Response:** No. The 21 podiatry authorizations only exist within the TDA/Military Treatment Facilities. There are no authorizations or requirements within the Army's deployable force structure (TOE units) allocated to the podiatry specialty. There is, however, a wartime role for Podiatry that was established in 1994 for Podiatrists to act as skilled surgical assistants, debride major wounds and second degree burns, and reduce fractures of the ankle and tibia, but those positions have been scarce. Only four Podiatrists were deployed during Operation Iraqi Freedom in that role. Several times there have been calls for volunteers to deploy with medical units.

**Navy Response:** Yes. There are currently 10 dedicated deployment positions assigned to mobilization platforms.

**10. Is your Service planning on changing the number of authorizations for podiatrists?**

**Air Force Response: No**

**Army Response:** No. There are no plans to significantly increase or decrease 67G Podiatry authorizations, but pending initiatives for the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center may add 1-2 positions/authorizations to the future force structure.

**Navy Response:** Not at this time. The total number of authorizations is expected to remain at 27 through 2022.