

Feet First



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AMGFA CONFERENCE IN SYDNEY

Sydney will be the place to be on 28th and 29th August. Following the Annual General Meeting on Friday 27th August, the Conference will focus on medical conditions and how appropriate footwear can manage the condition and improve lifestyle choices.

Last year, most of the attendees at the conference in Melbourne reported that it was informative and provided clearer insights on the medical conditions that our customers suffer from. This year should be even better.

The conference will be held at the Westmead Children's Hospital near Parramatta and will include presentations by a number of foot specialists. Frances Reeves our Association Administrator is coordinating the event.

In conjunction with the conference, suppliers will be given the opportunity to exhibit their products. Although details are not yet finalised it is expected that the cost of the conference will be \$380 per person for members and the \$450 for non-members. Exhibitors will be given approximately 2.5 metres of exhibition space for their products. The cost to the exhibitors will be admission cost plus \$200. Business that have more than one person attending the conference will receive the new multiple-training discount which will offer considerable savings to attendees.

Certified Medical Grade Footwear Practitioners CMGFP will be able to use attendance at the conference as part of their continuing professional development requirements.

The conference will be an event that no-one who works in MGF will want to miss.

Special Points of interest:

- Annual Conference 28/29th August 2004
- CMGFA Day 3 & 4 Training June 2004
- CMGFA Day 1 & 2 Training in Perth in June
- Multiple Training Discounts

Don't forget
the AGM
27th August
2004

Cut off toes to fit your shoes

Sexy power shoes are an essential female accessory but they can be torture to wear. So women are resorting to an extreme solution - surgery.

Kelli Richards, 31, spent \$US10,000 (\$15,300) on a foot operation when she could no longer stand the agony. "I'm fashion-conscious and I want to wear what's out there, but my bunions used to stick out," she said. "My feet ached so much I was having to wear flip-flops instead of dressing up and going out."

Ms Richards, from Philadelphia, is a fashion victim of the cult for Manolo Blahnik and Jimmy Choo shoes that often narrow to a sharp tip. Once strictly for evening wear, they became must-have items for professional women to squeeze into.

The surgeon shortened Ms Richard's second toe by removing a piece of bone, straightened her little toe and cut off a bunion. Her operation took place in February so she could enjoy the summer in peek-a-boo sandal.

Deborah Wilton from New Jersey endured the same. She felt her feet were so ugly she would bury them in the sand on the beach. "When people would see my feet they'd say: `Oh my God, look at your toes!'" After surgery to shorten her second toe, she rejoiced: "I am wearing open toed shoes for the first time in my life."

Stephen Smith, a Californian podiatrist, said he turned away at least 50 patients a year who wanted extreme operations. "We have people come in and say: `My foot is too wide. Can you get rid of my little toe?'"

Suzanne Levine, who operated on Richards, is known as the "foot facelift doctor". She performs about 300 foot operations a year, a phenomenon she ascribes to the reluctance of women to accept middle age. Foot surgery often draws the same clients as plastic surgery. "I've had people ask for toe liposuction. I tell them to go see a therapist," she said.

The Sunday Times



Foot Problems

Many people think that it is natural for their feet to hurt. That isn't true. Any time you have foot pain that lasts longer than a week you should get the pain examined.

Foot Health Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Walk. This is the best form of exercise for your feet.
- Wear properly fitting, protective footwear even in your own home.
- Use ice (cold) to treat an injury. This treatment produces a numbing effect and prevents swelling and pain.
- Investigate "walking pumps." These shoes have an athletic shoe-derived construction, wider toe room, reinforced heels and are available in many fashionable styles.
- Seek medical attention at the first sign of an injury or infection in the foot or ankle
- Consult a podiatrist. There are 300 different foot ailments, none of which should be neglected.

DON'T

- Take life lying down. Regardless of your physical condition, walking is beneficial.
- Go barefoot. This increases the risk of injury and infection and provides no support for either the foot or ankle.
- Use heat or hot water to treat a foot or ankle injury. Heat promotes blood flow, causing increased swelling.
- Wear heeled shoes that exceed two inches for extended periods of time. This is an open invitation for foot problems such as metatarsalgia (pain in the ball of the foot).
- Wear athletic shoes for sports other than the ones for which they were intended. One style does not fit all. Also, do not wear any sports shoe beyond its useful life.





From the President's Desk

There is so much happening with AMGFA at the present time it is almost overwhelming. The programs and services that we have been developing for the past few years are beginning to bear fruit and I believe that you, the members of AMGFA, are starting to realise the benefits.

Our training programs are in place and in February we had 25 people attend days 1 and 2 of the four day certification program. These trainees have completed the first step to certification and we hope they will continue the process to become certified medical grade footwear practitioners.

February was also the month that eight of our members took advantage of the offer by Peter Reeves to help with the preparation of their OH&S Risk Management plans. These plans are now compulsory for all businesses in NSW and by working with Peter, the members were able to get a substantial discount on its preparation. The workshop which was an integral part of the method for preparing the plan. Peter is now customising those plans for each business involved.

The competency requirements for Medical Grade Footwear Practitioners have been published and we are



assessing the outcomes. These competency standards were prepared with experienced consultants and

have been published as part of the National Training Standards. This is a project we have been working on for over four



years, and we are pleased to see this outcome. The standards can now be used by Universities, TAFE's and other Registered Training Organisations to prepare Certificate, Diploma and Degree Courses. The next step will be to demonstrate to these bodies that there is a demand for these courses.

Last year we also launched our Quality Assurance Program, where we prepared a generic quality manual and procedures for MGF manufacturers. Twelve businesses from Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania have taken advantage of the program and

were able to use these management systems as evidence of quality assurance in the DVA tender. I can only recommend to all members that they consider implementing this quality system in a way to assure the standards for our profession.

To top off the services we are offering, last week seven of our members undertook a Senior First Aid training course, run by St. John Ambulance and coordinated by RIMS Consulting on our behalf.



Before the next "Feet First" we will be holding day 3 and 4 training for the CMGFP in Sydney certification and day 1 and 2 in Perth.

But probably more exciting than all the above is our second Annual Conference which will be held in Sydney. The conference will have a number of national and international experts in mobility problems. There will also be provision for an exhibition by suppliers and a conference dinner.

The date is 28th and 29th August. Advance publicity will be coming out shortly. Put the date in your diary and be ready to be part of the best AMGFA conference yet.

Regards,
Karl





GST and Medical Grade Footwear Services

Since June 2000, all business's have become familiar with the terminology of the Australian Taxation Office. From BAS statements (Bloody Aggravating Stress time) and PAYG (Pay all Your Gain) statements, the medical grade footwear service industry has had plenty of its own special issues to seek answers about.

In my own case I e-mailed their "reply in 5" (Guarantee reply in 5 days) not long after 1st July 2000 rolled past. I can't remember what it was about but I still like to think my question might be getting closer to the top.

Originally the industry was notified that because "surgical shoes and boots" and "orthotics" were listed in legislation under Schedule 3 as qualifying items of health, these would be GST Free to patients and public and private institutions.

The industry welcomed this recognition but alas what looked to be absolutely black and white, as always, quickly changed shading, from black to gray and from white to a slightly dirty brown.

The original legislation stated Section

Section 38-45

- (1) A supply is GST-free if:
- (a) it is covered by Schedule 3 (medical aids and appliances), or specified in the regulations; and
 - (b) the thing supplied is specifically designed for people with an illness or disability, and is not widely used by people without an illness or disability.

Since July One 2003, major suppliers and minor ones have been seeking special ATO rulings regarding the 'fringe' type health footwear, traditional extra depth footwear and footwear modifications for health reasons. Each one seeking the answer to the simple question, "do my footwear qualify for "surgical shoe / boot"?" "Why (not)?" Other people have simply made educated guesses and possibly just decided to charge GST and be safe.

Common Ground

The ATO and AMGFA are now in consultation with each other and have established some good common ground.

The ATO have gone about the treatment of medical grade footwear services quite interestingly. What at first seemed like an illogical approach, once examined, does correlate well with the fundamentals of AMGFA.

1. They recognize Custom made, Retailers and modifiers of Footwear as having some services that may or may not have GST exemption.
2. They recognize the MGF Practitioner is the person to make the exemption decision - NOT the referrer (if any).
3. They very much advise us to support the case for an exemption with documentation.

All 3 points sit very closely with the policy of AMGFA / certification and training guidelines.

Where it becomes interesting is

They use the term **Surgical Shoe / boot** in the legislation under the heading 'medical aids and appliances' They have defined this term using the Macquarie Dictionary (world renown).

Historically in Australia we have known this term to be used for "custom made shoe for people with foot deformities", or Orthopaedic footwear. We have come to use the term Medical Grade to cover custom and depth and (in some cases) modified footwear. The term is outdated of course (some may disagree) reflecting a time in history when it was normal to make all surgical footwear for men - welted soles and the stiffer and heavier the footwear, the better - it seemed.

Therefore what becomes critical to understand is not why they used the term 'surgical shoe' but what is the definition they use to either include or decline a particular footwear service.

This is where the real thinking behind their decision-making is.

Macquarie Dictionary states the definition for surgical shoe is.... "a specially constructed boot or shoe designed to support or correct a deformed foot... Or protect following surgery"

It deals with 2 items

- The purpose of design of the product
 - The purpose of the construction of the product.
- Therefore it has to have specific design properties and has to have specific construction properties.

Is the item you are providing designed with the purpose to support or correct a deformed foot?

Is the item you are providing constructed specially to support or correct a deformed foot?

Is it widely used by people without disabilities?

To my thinking, in an Audit situation you will need to show at least 3 things.



1. What was the special design?
2. What was the special construction?
3. What was the deformity?

You will need to document each case

This definition also sits well with our constitution and also the Minimum Specifications for Medical Grade Footwear established in 2001.

However applying this definition alone does not automatically mean GST exemption/. Remember Section 38 - 45 says it is *not widely used by people without a disability*.

Modified Footwear

Now remember this not only deals with Custom Made footwear, Prefabricated footwear, Partial prefabrication footwear but also normal footwear modified for the purpose 'to correct or support or protect following surgery'.

The ATO are quite intent on including modified normal footwear as having possible GST exemption. How so, I hear you ask?

If the modifications are enough to change that shoe from being a 'normal' shoe into a 'surgical shoe' (true to the definition). Once again AMGFA policy is common here.

Once again to my thinking in an Audit situation you will need to show at least 3 things.

1. What was the special modification design?
2. What was the special modification construction?
3. What was the deformity?

You will need to document each case.

For instance - In a Leg length difference scenario these answers would come easily. In a bunion stretch scenario it would be hard to show clearly.

Some more examples

1. A shoe that is a *normal* shoe and has been modified whereby it can be shown that it changes a *normal* shoe into a *surgical shoe* (by the ATO definition) is exempt from the GST. (So long as it is not widely used by people without disabilities!)
2. A custom made shoe that cannot be shown to be a *surgical shoe* (by the ATO definition) is NOT exempt.

Your help is needed

Currently AMGFA is working with people within the industry , that is MGF Retailers, shoe repairers, custom MGF's , and the like to produce a thorough list of examples where people within the industry can clearly see common and not so common examples. Examples such as ...Velcro straps on ordinary shoes... Or custom made shoes for someone with very wide feet but no clinical condition... Or are housecalls on exempt items to be included as GST free.

Please feel free to email or fax a request of a 'grey issue' for you in your business. The more examples the clearer it will become for the ordinary bloke trying to spend more time doing what he does best and not trying to be a pseudo Tax accountant.

Ernie Tye
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Multiple Training Discounts

With the ongoing training programs being offered by AMGFA, we have reassessed our discount policies.

There will continue to be significant reductions for members, but it has been agreed by the management committee to offer discounts for businesses that bring more than one staff member to a training program. The discount for multiple attendees will be 25% for the 2nd and subsequent person. This discount will be applied even if a member discount is also applied, for example, the pricing for the Annual conference if the estimated prices are applied.

A business arranges for three staff members to attend. Two of the staff are members of AMGFA and the third is not.

	Base Price	Discount	Total
Cost first person (member)	\$380.00	-	\$380.00
Cost second person (member)	\$380.00	\$ 95.00	\$275.00
Cost third person (non-member)	\$450.00	\$112.50	<u>\$337.50</u>
			<u>\$992.50</u>

This is a significant saving for the business that achieves a better trained staff and increased morale.



Cosmetic Foot Surgery To Beautify Feet Has Serious Repercussions - America's Foot MD Surgeons Warn of Complications

AOFAS is worried about what it calls an alarming trend in women's health and fashion: cosmetic surgery to improve appearance of women's feet or to accommodate their feet fashion shoes. Among the surgeries being touted by some include shortening of the toes, narrowing of the feet, injecting the pad with collagen or other substances, and other procedures performed solely to change the appearance of the feet, rather than provide pain relief or improve foot function.

In an official statement on cosmetic foot surgery released on FootCareMD.com, the new public information site of the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society (AOFAS) do not warn consumers that the risks inherent in such surgery can outweigh the benefits. The medical advisory notes that foot surgery should not be performed in the absence of pain or functional limitation.

"The public needs to be aware of the risks associated with procedures," counseled AOFAS President Glen Pfeffer San Francisco, CA. "Women need to know what they are getting into." He noted that the trend towards the practice of cosmetic surgery raises serious concern when one considers the risk of surgery on painless feet. "Complications can include infected nerve injury, prolonged swelling of a toe, and even chronic problems with walking," Pfeffer said. The Foot and Ankle Society do take a public stance on cosmetic foot surgery after recent consumer magazine articles ran stories on women who had surgery so that their feet would look "prettier" and fit better in their shoes.

Studies have shown that many of the most prevalent forms of deformities including bunions, hammer toes, claw toes, or neuromas and bunionettes are associated with the repetition of ill-fitting shoes. "To perform surgery with significant risks in order to put the foot back into the very device that caused the problem is inappropriate," said Sharon Dreeben, M.D., LA, CA, chair of the AOFAS Public Education Committee. "Continuing to wear ill-fitting shoes will likely lead to a reoccurrence of foot deformity, pain, or new forefoot problems. At worst, cosmetic surgery may result in a woman being unable to wear any shoes, let alone fashionable shoes."

COPE Symposium

PFA and its Council on Pedorthic Education (COPE), offer Symposium attendees the most current topics and trends in the pedorthic profession and industry, are inviting speakers to bring fresh and engaging material to the pedorthics education program. General and break-out sessions present the PFA Symposium receive

professional Continuing Education Points (CEPs) by the Board for Certification in Pedorthics.

The 2004 Symposium theme is "The Foot: At Work & Play" will take place November 11-14 at the Royal Pacific Hotel Orlando, FL.

Share your knowledge and expertise by submitting a call for presentations for the industry's largest exhibit and education event. Accepted presentations, plus a group of notable pedorthic industry speakers, form an education program specifically for pedorthic professionals at all career stages.

To obtain a Call for Presentations, visit www.pedorthics.com and download the on-line form, or use the form found in the January 2004 issue of Current Pedorthics magazine.

National AOFAS Online Survey On High Heel Use and Cosmetic Surgery Collects Public Viewpoints on Shoe Fashion

Dreeben added that fashionable shoes can be widened or otherwise modified or the wearer can choose to wear short heels. "Changing the shoe to fit the foot is a perfectly acceptable practice," she said. "What the Society discourages is changing the foot to fit the shoe." An interactive survey has been put on the AOFAS public website FootCareMD.com which the public are invited to complete. The results of the survey will be presented at the annual conference of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in March. The survey can be found on <http://www.footcaremd.com/survey.html>. The survey utilizes advanced data collection and analysis technology developed by the national online survey company QuestionPro of Seattle, WA.

ADVERTISE IN *Feet First*

The next newsletter will be published in June if you wish to advertise your products or services please contact:

MRS FRANCES REEVES
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A nominal fee will be charged.



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Arthritis/Incorrect Posture

The skeletal system of our body is a wonderful machine that our Maker created. He made sure that all of our body (from the bottom of our feet to the top of our head) was expertly joined and perfectly knitted together, functioning in such a way that we can all live normal lives, from children, to adults and onto maturity.

However, it does appear that due to our human nature there are some imperfections. It also seems to appear that our lower limbs are more affected than the upper parts of our body. I believe the problem is mainly due to incorrect posture. Incorrect posture is caused by high arches, weak ankles, knock knees, leg length difference, standing on your feet for long periods of time (especially on hard surfaces) and mainly due to wearing unsuitable and unsupported footwear.

The footwear we wear today may determine what kind of health we have tomorrow. Medical Grade (Orthopaedic) Footwear is made to fit the feet whereas for most general footwear, the feet have to fit the footwear.

According to the dictionary, arthritis is the inflammation of the joints. Incorrect posture also causes inflammation and discomfort of the joints leading to pain. Because our body is out of alignment and off balance, we could then say that in some cases arthritis could be mistaken for incorrect posture. The answer is yes and here are some testimonies that will back it up.

Roma

Discomfort Severe knee pain (arthritis) due to worn knee bones.

Outcome I no longer have to take arthritis medication and am able to stand long periods of time with much less discomfort.

Bill

Discomfort Real misery when walking due to Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Outcome My problem has improved immensely since obtaining Medical Grade (Orthopaedic) Footwear. I can now walk great distances without any aches or pains. It has altered my everyday life style so much for the better.

Ross

Discomfort Callouses, arthritis, surgical scabs very tender - bones sore - need new boots badly - chronic pain all over.

Outcome No callouses, now boot firm fitting, easy and gentle on my foot, pain has eased and I am getting around much better.

Susan

Discomfort Extreme pain in both feet but worse in my right foot caused by arthritis and collapsed metatarsals.

Outcome I can walk in comfort for most of each day now, the difference is extraordinary and worth all the cost in time and money (purchased Medical Grade (Orthopaedic) Footwear) to get the relief that I have now.

Tom

Discomfort I was currently wearing fibreglass/carbon fibre orthosis fittings - these had to fit inside ordinary boots/shoes. It was like walking on concrete most of the time - I had osterio arthritis in both feet.

Outcome I no longer have to use the fibreglass fittings. I had orthopaedic boots made for general wear and also had golf boots and ten pin bowling boots made which allowed me to enjoy my sporting life again. Modifications are made each time. I have my footwear repaired which at all times increases my comfort and mobility.

Myra

Discomfort Because of sever arthritis my right foot became twisted and both my knees were bad and I could hardly walk. I had much pain in both feet and my knees.

Outcome Since wearing boots and a calliper on my right leg the pain in my feet ceased and I am now able to walk. When my knees are okay I can walk pain free. I am very grateful for the help from Ovidio.

Beryl

Discomfort Could not wear a shoe of any make whatsoever because of Lumber Canal Stasis, Arthritis and fractured vertebrae; all spine problems.

Outcome Your shoes have enabled me to stay on my legs for short periods of time and can take short walks could not speak too highly of the workmanship and fit of Mr D'alessandro's shoes.

Arthritis and incorrect posture can be found in our bodies and they are both a pain! A person in pain needs help and the best treatment/cure to start with is to correct his/her posture/ foundation.

This practical treatment will realign the body and provide relief to these painful conditions such as back, knee, feet and heel pain.

Treating arthritis without first correcting incorrect posture could aggravate the persons' condition.



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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Secretary: Mr Casper Ozinga
Treasurer: Mr Ron Henson

What is the AMGFA?

The Australian Medical Grade Footwear Association has recognised the need for representing those people that provide service and product to patients that have mobility difficulties due to the medical problems with their feet.

Formed several years ago it is slowly growing so that it now regularly communicates with the key representatives from government and medical health funds. Through its programs, the AMGFA is encouraging its members to improve their qualifications and recognition. Programs include CMGFP, Quality Assurance and Competency Standards

The names and organisations of the people that earn the Medical Grade Footwear Practitioners (MGFP) Certificate and Registration will be published. The medical profession will be encouraged to recommend MGFP's to their patients for the provision of expert advice and product. The other sections of the certification system recognise the specialised Retail and Footwear Modification components of our profession.

The AMGFA is also providing guidance in the Quality Management of the organisations that are represented by its members. The Generic Quality System has been specifically designed for implementation in a Medical Grade Footwear organisation. It recognises the special relationship between the provider and the patient and assures the provision of expert advice and quality product by the organisation.

AMGFA has also been a major contributor to the development of the ANTA competency requirements that will shortly be published.

The AMGFA is for members that want recognition of their competency to provide a full service in the Medical Grade Footwear industry, work in organisations that have as their key objective to provide quality advice

CALENDAR 2004

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Contact</i>
5/6.6.04	Day 3 & 4 Training CMGFP \$280 members \$380 non-members	Liverpool NSW	Frances Reeves
19/20.6.04	Day 1 & 2 Training CMGFP \$280 members \$380 non-members	Perth WA	Howard Smith
27.8.04	Annual General Meeting Australian Medical Grade Footwear Association	Parramatta NSW	Frances Reeves
28/29.8.04	Annual Conference \$380 members \$450 non-members	Westmead NSW	Frances Reeves