

Real-life story - Alex Townsend

Podiatry offered Alex the opportunity to combine his interest in science with a desire to care for people. He has been qualified for three years and loves his job.



Alex Townsend Podiatrist

Employer or university Hounslow and Richmond Community Healthcare NHS Trust

Salary range £20k-£30k

What made you decide to become a podiatrist?

I looked at various different allied health professions and different areas of healthcare. The thing that struck me most about podiatry is the broad scope of practice. You get to see such a wide range of patients of different ages and backgrounds as well as getting to treat so many different conditions and problems.

The caring aspect of the career is another which really drew me to podiatry. As a podiatrist you are constantly helping people which is an amazing feeling, you see patients come in that can be in serious pain and discomfort and as a podiatrist you can treat that pain and really make a difference. This coupled with the more technical and scientific aspects made podiatry my number one choice.

I am also passionate about sport and podiatry is a career that allows you to practice with a range of different sports men and women which was a really attractive prospect when I was choosing my degree.

How did you become a podiatrist?

I've always been passionate about helping people and knew I wanted a career that had care at its heart as well as combining that with my interest in science. I started looking at degrees when I was about 16 and knew I wanted to do something in healthcare so I set about doing work experience in various different

settings including physiotherapy, dentistry and orthopaedics.

This included some work experience working in podiatry as I had friends who worked in the field. Immediately I knew that it was the career for me. It was great to get some early exposure to the field and the wide scope of practice, you really do see so many different things every single day.

So I was lucky in that I went into my second year of Alevels knowing that podiatry was the course for me and I haven't looked back ever since. I have now been qualified for three years and I love my job.

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What do you do?

It's very difficult to say because as a podiatrist there really are no two days the same!

You can go from working in a biomechanics clinic with a patient that has injured themselves whilst on a run to working in wound care with a group of diabetic patients. You come across different people and conditions every day and there is always a new challenge waiting round the corner.

As a podiatrist I've also had the opportunity to work at some amazing sporting events. This is something that I find really exciting. I have worked at the London marathon three times which involved working with both wheelchair athletes as well as the able bodied athletes. I have also worked at the marathon with members of the public who are racing and this is always an exciting prospect!

Exploring these different areas is something that is actively encouraged as a podiatrist as it's always beneficial to your wider work if you expand and increase your knowledge. These opportunities have definitely been some of my career highlights!

The best bits

By far the best thing about my job is when I sit down with a patient at their final review and I find out that they are symptom free and pain free! You really do get to see the impact that your work has on your patients' lives and you have an active involvement in improving their health and ultimately their day to day life.

Also, the variety involved in the role always surprises me and that's something I find really exciting. I'm never bored and that's really important for me, there's such a broad scope of practice and it's a field that is always evolving and developing so it throws up new and exciting things every single day.

Career plans and top tips for others

Now that I've been qualified for a few years I'm really excited to move forward with my career and continue to expand my knowledge and expertise.

First of all I plan to do a lot more sporting events. I'd really like to work at a triathlon so I have made that a personal goal of mine as I'm really interested in working with endurance athletes and all the challenges that

come with that. It's great that as a podiatrist I have the opportunity to combine my work life with the things that I am passionate about and I plan to carry this forward as part of my development.

I am also going to start a post-graduate course in podiatric sports medicine which begins in September and will allow me to expand my knowledge base in a muscular skeletal capacity. It's great that as a podiatrist I'm allowed to explore the areas that really interest me and I'm really looking forward to specialising even further and becoming a muscular skeletal practitioner.

I'd like people to know that podiatry is so much more than you think it is and I'd really encourage people to consider it as a career path as I'm sure there are things that will surprise you.

The profession has moved on a long way and there are so many new and exciting things that you can get involved with. There's definitely a lot more to it than people think!

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