

Get to Know NYCPM's Faculty: Russell G. Volpe, DPM ('83)
Professor of Orthopedics and Pediatrics



Russell G. Volpe, DPM, loves working with children; podopediatrics is Dr. Volpe's specialty and his passion. A 1983 graduate of NYCPM, Dr. Volpe completed his residency at the College in orthopedics and pediatrics, trained by Dr. Joseph D'Amico and others, and earned a fellowship in pediatrics through the College for his second post-graduate year. He has been on the faculty for 32 years. He is also the founding chairman of a dedicated pediatrics department here, and served as chairman of that department from 1993 or 2006, when the department was recombined with orthopedics. Dr. Volpe has run the pediatric podiatry clinic for NYCPM at Metropolitan Hospital for 20 years.

"Podiatric medicine focused on children gives us an opportunity to treat issues before they become problematic," Dr. Volpe says. "We can care for children who are asymptomatic before they exhibit symptoms." If we do, adults will have better feet because they were treated when they were younger. Children today are involved at younger and younger ages in sports. "If a child has a biomechanical insufficiency and is involved with sports, this combination could be a combustible situation." That child's at risk. Parents, pediatricians, coaches and others involved in this young athlete's life should be attentive to the possibility of this scenario in the child with pain, who tires easily or seems to have difficulty keeping up with others.

Dr. Volpe is co-editor with Peter Thompson of Introduction to Podopediatrics, a frequently consulted reference that is one of the 'bibles' of the specialty, he says; they hope someday to produce another edition. He is a frequent contributor to Podiatry Today and is on the publication's editorial board and contributes to other journals and publications as well.

Dr. Volpe says he has seen remarkable changes at the College over the years; it's now a very different institution. For students, clinical training has improved in both depth and breadth, though as far back as when he went to school, clinical training was already a strength and hallmark of NYCPM. In his student days, most clinical training was provided by the Foot Center of New York.

Since the late 1990s, however, the hospital affiliations that NYCPM obtained have enabled students to experience clinical situations in a variety of outside settings; the College has always provided a "robust and dynamic" clinical experience for students, Dr. Volpe says. At that time (late 1990s), the College was in the forefront of adding extensive, hospital-based outside clinical experiences to its curriculum. Further, students have changed over the years, too. Over the past decade, Dr. Volpe thinks the College has seen some of the most talented students it's ever had.

Another experience the College provides is the opportunity to go to the United States Military Academy

at West Point and (currently) to participate in “high level collaborative research.” For about 10 years, trips to West Point were dedicated to a herculean effort to properly fit approximately 1200 new cadets’ boots. About five years ago, the College started working with Jinsup Song, DPM, PhD of Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine and Howard Hillstrom, PhD, Director of the Gait Lab at the Hospital for Special Surgery, under Colonel Michael Neary, DPM, Director of Podiatric Services at the hospital at West Point, to gather data on cadets’ feet to determine if certain foot types predict injury during the vigorous demands of training at West Point. It’s a highlight of the year and a terrific opportunity for our student volunteers, Dr. Volpe said with real enthusiasm.

Dr. Volpe has some concerns for the future, too. He thinks that biomechanics, orthopedic medicine and podopediatrics need to remain essential components of podiatric medicine, and that the increased emphasis on advanced surgical procedures and other advanced, but sometimes esoteric, techniques in a three-year residency means that other core aspects of podiatric medicine may get lost. “Podiatric biomechanics and related fields are a lot of what defines us as a profession,” he says. “The annual Schuster biomechanics seminar is a good example of what we need to do, but it’s only one day.” This critical component of podiatric medicine has to be guarded and protected for our students, for our colleagues and for our profession.

Dr. Volpe is married to his 1983 classmate, Barbara Pelc, DPM, and they have three grown sons. Dr. Volpe looks forward to continuing to teach and says he remains very gratified to guide third-year students interested in his specialty. He also loves private practice and caring for patients, mostly children. Dr. Volpe has two offices – the original Farmingdale location he’s had since 1986, and the midtown Manhattan office he opened in 2003.

One more passion – Dr. Volpe has a very active hobby of attending opera and theatre performances, and contributes criticism to some listservs.