Dr. Gonzalez Teaches Course at Podiatry Institute
By: The Foot and Ankle Center of Illinois

The Podiatry Institute is a nationally and internationally recognized  non-profit educational foundation that offers a variety of programs conferences, workshops and postgraduate courses for advancing podiatric medicine and surgery.

The faculty members are all volunteers who are committed to ongoing education in the area of foot and ankle surgery.

Last month, Grant Gonzalez. D.P.M., from the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois, Springfield, IL, taught a Forefoot Cadaver Surgical Course at the Podiatry Institute of DeKalb Medical Center in Decatur, Georgia, with Casey Burchill, D.P.M.

The three-and-a-half day course was aimed at increasing the attendees comfort with performing common podiatric forefoot and basic rearfoot surgical procedures through live surgical observation and hands-on participation. The course included lectures and detailed instruction in surgical procedures for the foot and principles of internal screw compression fixation.

Participants were orthopedic and podiatric surgeons from ten different states across the country.

“We went through the forefoot and explained the details of different cases, normally starting with a lecture followed by a demonstration of the procedure, and then each participant would perform the procedure on their own individual cadaver limb,” said Dr. Gonzalez.

This process was repeated for several deformities including bunions, hammertoes, great toe joint fusion, midfoot fusion, and tailor’s bunion correction.

Additional time was provided to allow for exploratory dissection, and practice of previous procedures.

Dr. Gonzalez has taken time to answer some questions and speak more about his work and the lifelong process of learning.

***Why it is important to continue education?***

**Dr. Gonzalez:** Medicine and surgery are constantly evolving and the “standard of care” can change from one decade to another. Some procedures that were commonplace in my grandfather’s days have been completely abandoned today, whereas others have simply been improved.

***How are you involved with the Podiatry Institute?***

**Dr. Gonzalez:** All members of the DeKalb Podiatric Surgical Residency program work with the Podiatry Institute during residency, and are trained in medical education and lecturing. After graduating, we become faculty members and are able to lecture at Podiatry Institute Seminars across the country, along with moderating cadaver courses at the Institute. Residents applying for the program certainly understand the additional benefit of graduating from DeKalb and it is quite competitive.

***What does it mean for patients to have such highly trained foot and ankle surgeons here at the Foot and Ankle Center of Illinois?***

**Dr. Gonzalez:**. A surgeon with a greater knowledge base and skillset can offer their patients the greatest variety of treatment options and choose a procedure or treatment plan that is most appropriate for each individual patient, instead of practicing as a technician who uses the same cookie cutter approach for everyone.

***Why do you use cadaveric limb?***

**Dr. Gonzalez:** Cadaver limbs create a very realistic training environment mimicking the operating room experience as much as possible. This creates familiarity with the procedure and can hone surgical skills more effectively than alternative methods. As residents at DeKalb, we were able to perform every new procedure on a cadaver before ever doing one in the operating room, which gives additional practice, identifies difficult parts of the procedure and allow optimal planning for the surgery on an actual living patient. We don’t experiment in the operating room; generally every procedure has been fine tuned in the cadaver lab beforehand.

***What is your favorite part about performing surgery?***

**Dr. Gonzalez:** Diminishing pain and improving patient function through reconstructive procedures, whether they be minor or major, is the part that still leaves me in awe during and after every case.

***You are a fourth generation podiatrist. How has surgery changed throughout your family timeline?***

**Dr. Gonzalez:** There has been a bigger focus on scar minimization and reducing perioperative pain and swelling control than in years’ past. If I would have told my grandfather (Dr. Frank Siebert, also a Podiatrist) 30 years ago that we would one day have a laser that could reduce perioperative pain and swelling and decrease recovery times, he would have had a good laugh. Keeping people as ambulatory as possible postoperatively has also been a huge focus as it leads to less debility afterwards and reduces the overall recovery time.

Dr. Gonzalez is an associate at the Foot and Ankle Center of Illinois, in Springfield, IL. Visit myfootandanklecenter.com to learn more about the doctor and his work.