

Sports Medicine and Arthroscopic Treatment of the Foot and Ankle



What Is New and Current in Singapore

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KEYWORDS

• Foot and ankle • Sports • Arthroscopy • Treatment • Singapore

KEY POINTS

- Foot and ankle abnormalities are common in Singapore because of the compulsory conscription, the slipper-wearing culture, and the promotion of healthy living through exercise.
- The rapidly aging population, lack of elite sportsmen, and social and cultural norms pose unique challenges to foot and ankle surgery.
- Orthopedic surgery in Singapore has progressed because of the good infrastructure and modern practices executed by fellowship-trained surgeons.
- Evolving local practices are polarized by practice trends emulated from North America and Europe.
- The small community of foot and ankle surgeons currently practicing in Singapore allows for easier communication, corroborative educational events, and research initiatives among surgeons.

INTRODUCTION

Singapore is an independent city-state in South-east Asia. Since its independence in 1965, Singapore has developed rapidly into a modern metropolis with a population of 5.5 million people.¹ Along with Singapore's rapid development, standards in living, education, and in particular, health care have reached admirable heights. The Singapore Healthcare Model has evolved from a British-influenced system into its current state as a modern, cost-effective, and unique model. Orthopedic surgery in Singapore itself started from humble beginnings and has since progressed into a first-world service

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characterized by good infrastructure and modern practices executed by surgeons incarnated from structured training programs and fellowship training from internationally acclaimed centers.

This article aims to describe the health care system and unique population challenges in Singapore and their effects on the current foot and ankle practices as well as the influences for new developments in this subspecialty.

THE SINGAPORE HEALTHCARE MODEL

The Singapore Healthcare Model consists of both a public and a private health care arm. Approximately 4% of the gross domestic product is spent on the public health care sector with the aim to provide affordable and competent health care services.² This model is well lauded internationally, with Singapore ranked as the world's 6th best health care system by the World Health Organization in the year 2000.³

The public health care system is designed to be a universal system centered around a "3M" principle: Medisave, Medishield, and Medifund. Medisave is a compulsory medical savings account contributed monthly by both the worker and their employer. This enforced savings allows for a financial safety net in the event of unforeseen medical fees. Medishield is a government-run, low-cost health insurance plan that uses the concept of risk pooling. This scheme allows Singaporeans to mitigate financial strains for large hospital bills and costly outpatient services. Finally, Medifund is a government endowment fund that can help needy patients should they require financial assistance for medical bills.

The basis of the 3M model is that of shared responsibility, copayment, and affordable health care. The copayment concept allows for a degree of cost containment because ordinary citizens often choose the most cost-efficient medical care. Translated to orthopedic surgery, this results in patients being mindful of excessive procedural as well as implant costs. Cost-effectiveness is thus an important factor in deciding the type of surgical intervention.

Health Care Facilities and Manpower

A total of 10,756 hospital beds are available in 25 public hospitals and specialty centers in Singapore.⁴ Of those 25 locations, there are 6 acute general hospitals, each with its own orthopedic surgery department. The public hospital pricing serves as a benchmark for the 10 private hospitals. In terms of specialist manpower, there are 184 registered orthopedic specialists in Singapore as of 2013, with 112 (61%) in public practice.⁵ As the population continues to grow and age, there is a need to increase the number of orthopedic specialists. In 2010, Singapore adopted the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) residency system. There is now an increased number of orthopedic surgery trainees with up to 25 new orthopedic surgeons accredited yearly.

The first medical school in Singapore was founded in 1905.⁶ The academic Department of Orthopaedic Surgery was founded in 1952, as a result of increased global interest in orthopedic surgery as a distinct specialty. Orthopedic sub-specialty services began in the late 1970s. Postgraduate surgical training in Singapore has historically been based on the British system, with surgical education following a British style of basic and advanced surgical specialty training. Singapore is a Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh–accredited orthopedic training center. Singapore-trained orthopedic surgeons can thus sit for a joint exit orthopedic examination with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and successful candidates can obtain an

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