

*Medicare*

doctor of medicine. Not only has the minister been firm in his position but also very unreasonable. He has flatly stated that only doctors of medicine perform medical service, indicating thereby that the provincial statutes of Canada and the state laws in the United States—where licensed doctors of surgical podiatry and doctors of podiatric medicine treat foot diseases by medical and surgical means—are meaningless and that only his definition is correct.

He suggested to us that if a doctor of medicine reduces a fractured bone in a foot and puts a cast on it, this is medical care service. Yet, if a podiatrist does it, it is not.

He also said that if a doctor of medicine makes an incision in a patient's foot with a scalpel, removes tissue or bone and then closes the incision with sutures, this is medical care service, but if a podiatrist were to make the same incision, remove the same lesion and close the incision with the same sutures, this is not medical care service.

The minister said that if a doctor of medicine administers or prescribes an antibiotic for the treatment of an active infection in a patient's foot, this is medical care service, but if a podiatrist administers or prescribes the same antibiotic for the treatment of the same infection in the same foot, then this is not medical care service. The minister's unreasonable position is absolutely incomprehensible, devoid of common sense and impossible to analyse.

The minister must acknowledge that there are two groups of professional men who are granted licences to treat feet. The licence of the doctor of medicine permits him to treat the whole body, medically or surgically, the podiatrist's licence permits him only to treat the foot, medically and surgically. It is for this reason he is often referred to as the physician and surgeon of the foot.

Since the podiatrist is a foot specialist he is expected to be, and generally is, more knowledgeable and proficient in the care of the human foot and its afflictions than is the general physician and surgeon. However, this is not what is under debate, since the number of podiatrists on the staffs of hospitals in North America could well be an indication of the efficacy of that line of thinking.

The minister may choose to ignore this, but he cannot ignore the fact that both doctors of medicine and doctors of surgical podiatry are licensed by law to treat feet. He cannot brush aside the fact that by excluding licensed podiatrists from the bill he is discriminating

against them and committing genocide of the profession of podiatry in Canada.

How can anyone compete with free care? How can doctors of surgical podiatry, if excluded from coverage and thereby forced to charge their patients for services rendered, compete with doctors of medicine who, being included, can provide the service free of charge?

If the minister does not wish to discriminate against legally qualified and licensed podiatrists, and at the same time does not wish to include podiatrists in the bill, then he must remove from the list of compensable services under medicare any form of care or treatment of feet by anyone. If the minister wishes to do this—which I certainly do not think would be advisable, but we know he has the power to do so—then, at least he cannot be accused of committing professional genocide or of discrimination.

However, if he feels as I do, that the care of the human foot is vital to the health of its owner, then he must recognize the right of Canadian citizens to choose freely whatever licensed practitioner they wish to treat their feet. Any other action would demonstrate a total lack of concern based on chimerical thinking and the reluctance to face true facts.

The ways and means committee of the United States Congress has prepared a recommendation which will be presented to the Congress when it reconvenes after the new year. It included under compensable services the services of licensed doctors of surgical podiatry who qualify under the definition of the term "physician" and sets out the functions which they are legally authorized to perform by the state in which they practise.

To my knowledge no recommendation of the ways and means committee has ever been rejected, and there is no reason to believe that this one will be. Are the citizens of the United States so much better than the citizens of Canada that they deserve the services of foot specialists under their medicare plan while our people do not? Is it the intention of the minister to withdraw the services of podiatrists under the bill? If this is to be done, then the people of Canada will only receive partial medical services. Is this the objective of the bill?

What is the minister's position on this matter? Are "all medical care services" as indicated in the bill, to be covered, or are they not? Surely the minister is aware of the increasing incidence of foot trouble and the resultant increased demand for care. Such a