

The Alabama State Board of Podiatry

Advisory Opinion No. 20

The Alabama State Board of Podiatry (“Board”) has received the following question:

“In Alabama, are podiatrists allowed to supervise hyperbaric oxygen treatments (for foot wounds) as long as there is an MD or DO on the premises in case of emergency?”¹

The Board has reviewed Code of Alabama (1975) § 34-24-230, and the appropriate sections of the Alabama Administrative Code. This opinion was reviewed at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board on September 10, 2010. The question is answered in the affirmative.

The Board is the authority having jurisdiction over the practice of podiatry in Alabama. Code of Alabama (1975) § 34-24-231 defines podiatry, in pertinent part, as: “The diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the human foot, as described herein.” Further, the Code defines the practice of podiatry, in pertinent part, as: “The diagnosis and medical or surgical or mechanical or manipulative or electrical treatment of any ailment of the human foot...” Code of Alabama (1975) § 34-24-231(3).

Medical treatment is defined as: “The application to or prescription for the foot of pads, adhesives, felt, plaster or any medicinal agency for both external and internal use in connection with treatment of local ailments of the human foot, except such definition does not include the medical treatment of any systemic disease, but does allow treating the local manifestations of those systemic diseases in the foot.” Code of Alabama (1975) § 34-24-231(4).

Use of the hyperbaric oxygen chamber for the treatment of an ailment of the human foot, including wound care, falls within the parameters of the practice of podiatry as defined by the Alabama Legislature.

It is the opinion of the Board that a duly licensed podiatrist in Alabama is allowed to supervise hyperbaric oxygen treatments for foot wounds as long as there is an MD or DO on the premises.

¹ The question assumes that a licensed MD or DO is on the premises in case an emergency arises; therefore, any statutory or administrative requirements that a DO or MD be on site is not addressed by the Board.