



DR. HAL ORNSTEIN: LIFE AND THE WIZARD OF OZ

The *Wizard of Oz* celebrated its 70th anniversary this year with a digitally enhanced version of the classic 1939 movie shown on the wide-screen at theaters across the country. Hal Ornstein, DPM, of Howell, NJ, just might have been first in line at his local cinema to mark the occasion.

He's been a fan of the movie since the first time he saw it when he was a little kid, ostensibly for the same reason that we all liked the movie, but now his reasons go a bit deeper. As chairman of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management (AAPPM), he sees *The Wizard of Oz* as a metaphor for a successful life and a thriving podiatric medical practice.

Not only is he a fan of the movie, but he also owns one of the more amazing collections of *Oz* memorabilia on the planet, and his new suite of offices in New Jersey is replete with treatment rooms that feature different characters from the movie and even a yellow brick road winding down the treatment hallway.

"I've always loved it because it tells the story of life," he said. "It shows how everything is really in our own backyard, yet most of us don't realize that fact until it hits us in the head." continued on page 34

BY DAVID ZICH

continued from page 33

Talking about the movie's colorful characters, he called the Wicked Witch a "front," a character who had the aura of evil, yet who was actually quite easy to kill. The problem was that nobody wanted to get close enough to throw water on her, so she went on her way scaring everyone she could.

"How many people do you know in life who have a big bark, who enjoy making threats and just like being nasty?" he asked.



"They may think like the Wicked Witch, but in reality, they're just insecure." Speaking figuratively, Dr. Ornstein recommends tossing a bucket of water on feelings of insecurity or fear that keep one from advancing forward, whether it be about practice issues or personal goals. "You just have to change the way you think," he said. "And the only way to do it is to actively work on it. Every time you see that Wicked Witch trying to scare you away from making a positive move, you have to put her out of your mind."

The Scarecrow, his favorite character, is another example of how we sometimes behave. "If you watch the scarecrow, you'll see that the poor guy had no confidence in himself and he really believed that he had no brains," he said. "Yet he actually made every decision while they all were walking down the yellow brick road. The lion, too, was supposed to be cowardly, yet he was braver than he knew."

When Dr. Ornstein lectures at seminars throughout the year, he connects with his audience by calling himself "one of the biggest goofballs around. I say that I'm one puppy short of a kennel." Then the inspiration starts: "But we all have success within us," he says. "As soon as the Scarecrow got the diploma in his hand—which meant nothing—he became an instant intellectual! We have to believe in ourselves!"

"It's always that way," he continued. "I hang out with people with multimillion dollar practices and also with doctors who are ready to close their doors for good. The docs with the big prac-



tices aren't smarter than anyone else, they are just motivated, and success is the only option for them. The old saying is, 'what you believe, will happen.' If you think you are stupid, you will be. If you think you'll be poor, that will happen, too."

The scenes with Dorothy, the Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Man walking down the yellow brick road toward the Emerald City is another analogy that Dr. Ornstein applies to podiatric practice: "That road can have a negative connotation—sort of like a gerbil running round and round on a wheel, going nowhere fast. Podiatrists can get on that gerbil wheel by never changing anything, or by being afraid to invest in their practices.

"As beautiful as the Emerald City was, Dorothy and her friends—and Toto—didn't have to go there," he continued. "Get off the gerbil wheel and find your way. We all have our fears; be yourself and live your dream! What's happening today is Darwinism in health care. The strong are getting stronger; they figure out how to manage themselves better and how to maximize the sys-

tem for the best patient care. And they're happy and making a good living."

Dr. Ornstein had an audience with the Dalai Lama a few years back, and he said the overriding concern for His Holiness was peace of mind.

"Everyone wants success, but it's peace that we need to achieve for ourselves," he said. "Make every day your birthday. Don't look forward to a vacation; make it happen every day. If you're looking forward to that big vacation, then I think you need to reflect on life a bit more. Take control of your destiny!"

Dr. Ornstein isn't being self-critical when he says that all he does is "yap" when he lectures to groups of doctors or students about his experiences as a doctor. His method is designed to simply demonstrate "how to make everyone happier."

That happiness, he says, comes when podiatrists are motivated to work toward achieving peace of mind. "It can come from getting home earlier from work and spending more time with loved ones, or seeing more patients, or becoming rich and famous; I don't care what it is. All of us have our diplomas, and it's why I like the Scarecrow so much. If I can get into the minds of podiatrists and help them reach their definition of success, that's my passion."

One major step in that direction is the addition of a four-year practice management course of study getting underway at his

alma mater, the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine. Not coincidentally, the first assignment is asking students about their definitions of success. "Seven or eight of the best practice management minds in the country are setting the stage for this exciting program," he said, "and we're going to help out students find and live their dreams."

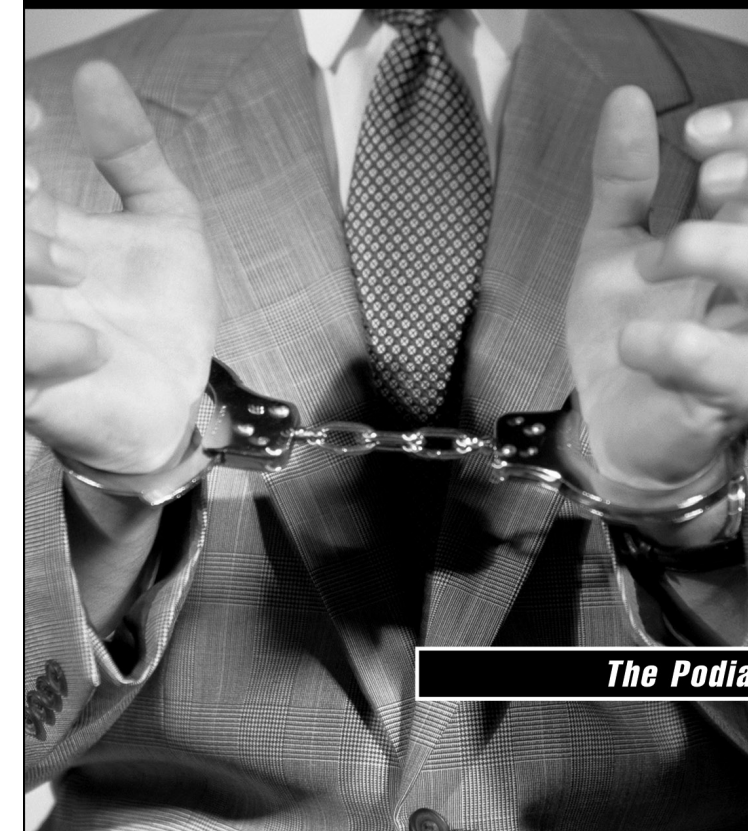
THE COLLECTION

Dr. Ornstein began collecting *Oz* memorabilia during his second year in practice when a patient brought him a plate. He put it on the wall of his office and it became a hit. "That's when I got excited about *Oz* and when I got the vision that it was a really great story." He now has 20 years' worth of collectibles, most stored in about 30 boxes at his home.

Many of the items in his collection were—and still are—donated by his patients, and he comments that hardly a month goes by when he doesn't get two or three gifts of *Oz* material from patients who found something at a yard sale or flea market that they knew he'd want.

Dr. Ornstein continued on page 36

Are you a prisoner of billing?



- Podiatry Exclusive
- Nationwide
- Maximize Reimbursement
- Decrease Billing Expenses
- Podiatric Coder on Staff
- Podiatry Practice Management Consultant on Staff
- Listed as Resource for Podiatry Billing Questions in *Podiatry Manual 2007*

American HealthCare Billing Services, LLC

The Podiatry Billing Company Experts

6604 Elvedon Drive, Suite 100, Dallas, Texas 75248
972.380.8028 866.880.4252
 phone toll free
 ahcbs@tx.rr.com

This page: Scenes from Dr. Ornstein's office.
 Page 32: A Scarecrow cookie jar brightens the practice.

continued from page 35

He has some high-end collectible material as well, including the original Cowardly Lion's tail that he picked up at Sotheby's Auction Gallery about 15 years ago. "I have some original theater cards that are also quite scarce, and their value today is based on what anyone is willing to pay. I'd love to get Dorothy's shoes, but the last time they went up for auction, they sold for \$600,000, so that's not going to happen!"

The frustration for Dr. Ornstein comes from the fact that collecting *Oz* memorabilia is becoming a craze and he rarely finds anything new for sale. "There used to be a time when auction houses would put out catalogs of valuable *Oz* material that were up for bidding," he said. "Now people are holding on their material; they aren't considering selling now."

Dr. Ornstein built his office two years ago after renting for many years:

"I had a vision of having a beautiful office and I wanted my staff to feel like they were coming home when they were here. Everything in the office is the best it can be, and to make the *Oz* theme happen, I hired an interior designer and let her imagination fly. I have no patience sitting down and picking out colors, so I gave her the ideas and the credit card. I now have seven treatment rooms and every one has a different character from

the movie." The office, in reality, is also a museum of *Wizard of Oz* memories.

Kids, of course, love the office and patients sometimes get frustrated because they want to tour all the treatment rooms, but they can't because there are patients in them. "It's a great reaction," said Dr. Ornstein. "Knowing what I do with the AAPP, I'd better have an amazing office with the nicest staff! It may be two years old now, but it looks brand new."

An "amazing office" also helps to market his practice. Patients expect quality foot care to be the norm when they visit a podiatrist, but they are "wowed" by what they see when they enter Dr. Ornstein's world of *Oz*. "What are you doing to market to your existing patients?" he asked. "How are you answering the phone? How are you treating them? What do you give a patient who has faithfully come in every two months for 20 years? Forget new patients. Wow the existing ones! It's all right in your own backyard."

Dr. Ornstein tells anyone who will listen that physicians today are in an enviable position in life. "Especially podiatrists," he quickly adds. "I was talking to some residents at Barry University and I told them that they were in the greatest of situations. With geriatric and diabetes numbers climbing, podiatric medicine has a lock on the future!"

"Everybody is looking for somewhere over the rainbow, but we have it, and it's right in our own backyard." ■

American Board of Podiatric Orthopedics and Primary Podiatric Medicine

3812 Sepulveda Blvd., Suite 530, Torrance, CA 90505

Phone: (310) 375-0700

Fax: (310) 375-1386

E-mail: admin@abpoppm.org

2010 Qualification and Certification Examinations June 26–27 Chicago*

Application Deadlines: Certification, January 9th Qualification, May 1st

- Eligibility for **Board Qualification** requires satisfactory completion of two years of CPME-approved post-graduate training which includes POR or PPMR training sequence or completion of a PM&S training program. (for example: PPMR+PSR-24 sequence = 3 years).
- Eligibility for **Board Certification** requires satisfactory completion of a minimum of two years CPME-approved residency inclusive of a POR, PPMR, or PM&S training sequence and a minimum of 42 months of clinical experience inclusive of residency training.
- **All Board Certification applicants must pass a case documentation review process as a pre-requisite to sitting for the oral examination.**

* The board qualification examination will be offered at several locations nationally.

visit www.abpoppm.org for information and to download applications