

New technology helps relieve heel pain

By **LEILA SPEISMAN**
Staff Reporter

A new, non-invasive and painless therapy offers relief from plantar fasciitis, a condition that causes severe heel pain.

Toronto podiatrist Hartley Miltchin has imported the technology, called DolorClast radial soundwave therapy (RST) from Switzerland. "I am always looking for new or better ways to help my patients," he told *The CJN*.

"The company [Electro Medical Systems] approached me, knowing that I'm in the forefront of new technologies, provided they seem worthwhile investigating, and there is no risk to the patient," he said.

Miltchin explained that plantar fasciitis occurs when the thick, fibrous band running from the toes to the heel – the plantar fascia – becomes unable to stretch as it should. Over time, the band tears and the area becomes inflamed.

"That's what hurts," he said.

The pain is worse after resting, he said, and if not treated, it can become more severe and constant. "People describe it like a knife is in their heel."

The DolorClast Radial Soundwave Therapy combines air pressure and electronics to produce sound-wave energy with

a computerized, controlled frequency. The operator holds a metal rod against the site of the pain for five minutes. The procedure, which is repeated three times over a three-to-four week period, sends sound waves to the area, to build new blood vessels so as to heal the tear, Miltchin explained.

No anesthetic is required. There are also no after-effects, and no recovery time is needed, he said.

While the procedure is very safe, Miltchin warned that people with pacemakers, malignancies or taking blood thinners, as well as pregnant women, should not undergo the procedure.

DolorClast RST is not the first new technology Miltchin has introduced to his practice. In 1993, he introduced endoscopic plantar fasciotomy, in which he makes a tiny incision in the heel and inserts a tiny camera and a surgical blade. The camera projects the image of the heel area onto a television monitor, which enables Miltchin to see what is going on inside the foot and to cut away the torn part.

The procedure is done in his office, and

patients can get around much faster afterward than with conventional surgery. He also uses the technique for such persistent foot conditions as calluses, bunions, and corns.

Miltchin explained that a doctor of podiatric medicine is a "highly trained foot

Miltchin deals with other foot problems besides those needing radial soundwave therapy or endoscopic plantar fasciotomy. Flat feet, ingrown toenails, corns, lower back pain caused by foot problems, and routine care for diabetics, including orthotics and nail care and calluses, are all important parts of his practice.

Miltchin considers his profession his "passion," and he does considerable volunteer work for it, including serving as executive director of the Canadian Podiatric Medical Association. "I want to educate the public that caring for feet is just as important as looking after your eyes and teeth."

Even his favourite hobby relates to podiatry.

"I have the largest collection of celebrity-

worn shoes, cleats, and ballet shoes around," he said, adding that the footwear, currently kept in a temperature-controlled storage facility, will be donated to the Bata Shoe Museum this spring.



specialist" who must complete four years of study at an American podiatry school ("There is no such school in Canada," he said), as well as one to four years in a surgical residency.