

A Systematic Technique

Nolaro24's RX24 QuadraStep streamlines custom orthotic fittings. BY DAN ALBANESE, PT

Physical therapists are trained to understand the biomechanic complexities of human movement and the implications of faulty mechanics on the foot and ankle, and the entire closed kinetic chain. Improper foot and ankle alignment leads to musculoskeletal syndromes.

Clinicians can apply numerous methods to assess and treat foot biomechanics. In fact, there are so many options that choosing an optimal orthotic system for my clinic was overwhelming.

I've long been a disciple of the traditional biomechanical foot and ankle examinations, including goniometric and gait assessments. Although there are many ways to evaluate and prepare a neutral foot impression in order to prescribe foot orthoses, the 24-foot type classification method developed by Roberta Nole, MA, PT, CPed, is the most practical method for me. This foot typing method has significantly improved the functional outcomes of my patients with biomechanical lower extremity pathologies.

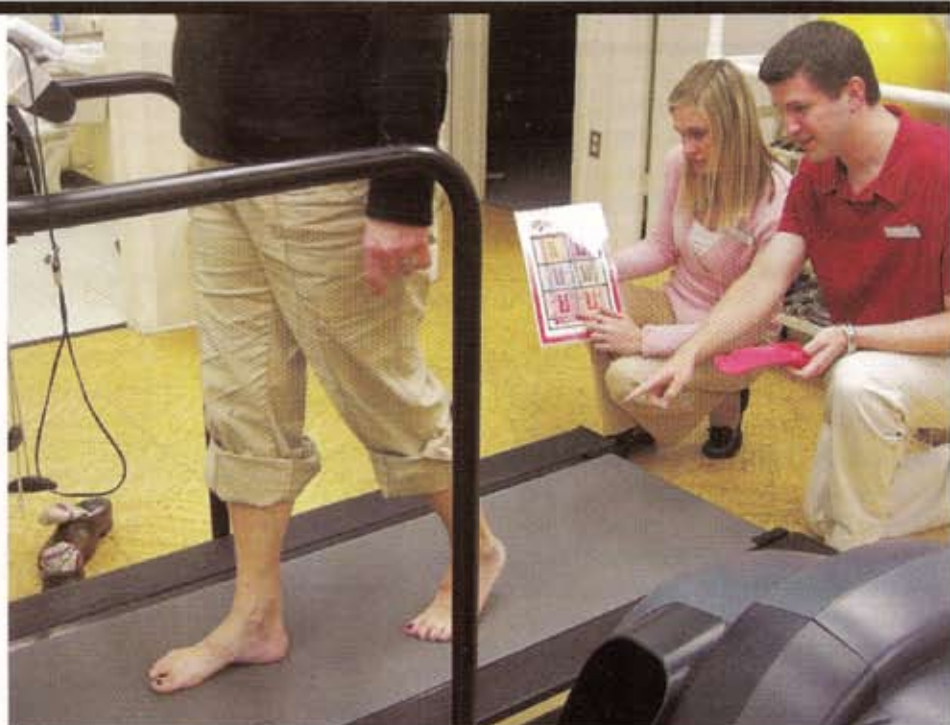
Due to today's declining economic conditions and lack of insurance coverage, some patients can't afford custom foot orthoses, which can cost \$300 to \$500. This reality increases the demand for physical therapists to find alternative ways to provide quality health care with less expense to the patient. My search for a simple, affordable and effective foot orthosis led me to Nolaro24 LLC's RX24 QuadraStep System™.

The system was introduced to me by Nole—the owner and inventor—as an offshoot of her 24-foot type classification system. In this system, Nole subdivides the 24 foot types into six groups of four foot types, known as "quads." Each quad group shows unique foot morphology, as well as specific foot and gait characteristics. The system teaches that a patient's quad type influences gait, conditions and pathologies.

Unlike other off-the-shelf orthoses that offer a "one shape fits all" arch support, this system offers six quad-specific functional orthoses. Each orthosis is biomechanically tailored to that of a custom prescription. As a mechanical therapist, I think it's imperative to restore a sound structural base to preserve the benefits of my treatment programs.

Although I still cast for custom orthoses for extreme cases, the diversity and quality of QuadraStep prefabricated orthoses make them an excellent solution for most of my patients. Being able to dispense from my on-hand fitting inventory is a key advantage, since patients can begin treatment without delay.

Implementing the process into daily practice is easy and takes only minutes. The first step is to observe a patient's feet in a relaxed standing



Dan Albanese, PT, and a co-worker use the RX24 QuadraStep System™ to evaluate a patient's foot type during gait.

Photo courtesy Maletta Pfeiffer and Associates LLC

position, assessing foot shape, arch height and preferred standing posture. I then watch the patient walk a short distance to evaluate foot progression angle, which is the level of toe-out or toe-in. I also observe callus patterns that are often specific to a particular quad type.

After these observations, I can choose the correct orthotic style. The system even provides a "cheat sheet" of characteristics to help me select the appropriate foot type. Additional support is offered by Nolaro24's free online educational materials, which describe the function of foot types and corresponding orthotic design.

The RX24 QuadraStep system is enhancing my practice growth by providing patients with a quality orthotic product, while addressing their budgetary concerns. In a time of declining reimbursements, this program also provides a valuable supplemental revenue stream for my practice. Now I can offer foot screenings to market my practice to corporations, sports organizations, fitness centers and community programs. ■

Dan Albanese, PT, is the owner of Maletta Pfeiffer and Associates LLC, with two locations in Torrington, Conn. He can be reached at dan@torringtonpt.com or www.torringtonpt.com