Proximal plantar fasciitis is the most common cause of heel pain, affecting more than two million adult Americans each year. It occurs over a wide age range, and it is seen in both sedentary and athletic individuals. Non-operative treatments for plantar fasciitis vary widely and include shoe modifications, use of prefabricated and custom inserts, stretching exercises, physical therapy, NSAIDs, cortisone injections, night splints, application of a cast, or any combination of these modalities.

For the majority of patients, resolution of symptoms occurs within 10 months; however, approximately 10% of patients go on to have chronic pain and activity limitations. A poor response to treatment may be due, in part, to inappropriate and nonspecific stretching techniques. Recent reports have evaluated patients with chronic plantar fasciitis in a prospective, randomized fashion, and have reported on 2-year follow-up results. They have noted enhanced outcomes in patients treated with non-weight-bearing stretching exercises that better target the plantar fascia, as compared to the standard program of weight-bearing Achilles tendon stretch exercises.

This presentation/debate will review non-operative treatment options for chronic plantar fasciitis, and will outline a new treatment approach which more optimally targets the plantar fascia. This plantar fascia specific stretching protocol has demonstrated enhanced outcomes in patients with chronic heel pain. It is believed to be effective for the majority of patients who have failed other traditional non-operative treatment modalities, even those who have had symptoms for a number of years. This treatment approach provides the health care practitioner with an effective, inexpensive, and straightforward treatment protocol with rates for resolution of symptoms that rival other more expensive and invasive treatment methods.
