



## A TOPIC AOPA IS WORKING ON THAT IS IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF YOUR BUSINESS

### Assuring the Adequate Future Flow of O&P Practitioners Is the Obligation of the Present Generation

Experts bemoan the lack of trained professionals in several walks of the health care world, whether it is the absence of a sufficient number of trained nurses or general practitioners in medicine. Those wringing hands may also be for O&P practitioners in the not too distant future as an aging population, obesity and other conditions require more and more services from the O&P community.

#### The Core of the Issue

The National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE), the accrediting body for O&P teaching institutions, saw the growing problem several years ago and approached AOPA as part of their effort to begin building solutions. Their request was two-fold: (1) that AOPA assist with supporting the efforts to advance the Masters degree as the entry level threshold in O&P and; (2) assist in assuring a sufficient flow of a trained, talented and committed new generation of prosthetists and orthotists to meet the growing need. Discussions with NCOPE leadership pinpointed their specific objective of increasing the number of educational institutions offering Masters Programs in O&P. Then the question became—where to get the funding?

#### Why Is It Important To You?

The future of O&P as a needed healthcare service is a certainty. How it's delivered is less of a certainty. But there's no question that there is a growing demand for O&P services requiring more and more highly skilled practitioners to meet that need for the next ten, twenty years and beyond. Failure of today's O&P community to respond could diminish opportunities as demand outstrips supply and other healthcare disciplines secure the scope of practice rights to provide services which up to now have been reserved for properly trained O&P professionals.

Efforts over the years to elevate education requirements to a Masters Degree level for certification has been the domain of the primary certifying organizations—the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC) along with the Board of Certification/Accreditation, International (BOC) and for the schools—NCOPE.



#### What Is AOPA Doing About This?

It was almost two years ago when AOPA was approached by NCOPE with the request that we assist both with supporting the efforts to advance the Masters degree as the entry level threshold in O&P and in assuring a sufficient flow of trained, talented and committed new generation of prosthetists and orthotists to meet the growing needs (e.g., projected increased incidences of diabetes and obesity) of our society in the years ahead. While this was a new area of endeavor for AOPA, after meetings and discussions with NCOPE leadership, a viable concept emerged to seek federal funding support to allow an increase in the number of educational institutions offering Masters Programs in O&P.

NCOPE notified educational institutions to secure their input, and of the NCOPE request to AOPA. The proposed program was reported to other stakeholders in the field, e.g., the AAOP, NAAOP and ABC—which are partners of AOPA in the O&P

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1)

Alliance, as well as the BOC which recently joined the Alliance, the Amputee Coalition and others. The concept met with very widespread support from the educational institutions and from the other stakeholder organizations, and so a substantial multi-year budgetary commitment was made by AOPA to underwrite the costs, and the program began in earnest in the summer of 2010.

The next step was to retain Linchpin Strategies LLC headed by Catriona Macdonald whose professional background includes working on the staff of the Senate Labor Committee and on the House Appropriations Committee. Ms. Madonald and Linchpin specialize in assisting clients in communicating their priorities and needs to the decision makers at all levels of government. Securing appropriated funds is her specialty in the areas of health, education and disability.

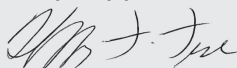
AOPA made the budgetary commitment with realistic expectations that appropriated funds may not materialize until 2013 or 2014 but any funds allocated to this project would represent an infusion of new funds into the O&P education development in an effort to assure a more reliable flow of highly qualified O&P professionals. Linchpin's efforts also extend to seeking appropriated funds for additional O&P research support for outcome studies, particularly where cost effectiveness can be

demonstrated to answer a multitude of treatment questions. Members of AOPA have also been enlisted to communicate this priority to their members of Congress serving on Committees that will have a hand in making this funding happen. It's a key ingredient to familiarize as many legislators as possible about the growing need and potential short supply of qualified providers of O&P services.


Like many of the current research and education development efforts undertaken by AOPA—the results at best will yield significant benefits long term for the entire O&P community but most importantly this project takes another meaningful step toward assuring quality patient care.

The *O&P Almanac* and the *AOPA-In-Advance SmartBrief* twice-weekly electronic newsletter will keep members posted as progress is made in this important endeavor.

Very truly yours,



Thomas F. Fise, JD  
AOPA Executive Director



HYNES CONVENTION CENTER, BOSTON

**AMERICAN ORTHOTIC & PROSTHETIC ASSOCIATION**

# AOPA


**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**HYNES CONVENTION CENTER**  
BOSTON, MA • SEPT. 6-9, 2012

**▶ MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

Attend the country's largest, oldest, and essential meeting for orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic professionals.

- ▶ SUPERIOR EDUCATION
- ▶ ADVANCED PROGRAMS
- ▶ MYRIAD OF EXHIBITS
- ▶ EARN CE CREDITS
- ▶ QUALITY NETWORKING



For information about the show, scan the QR code on the left with a code reader on your smartphone or simply visit [www.AOPAnet.org](http://www.AOPAnet.org).

