



# *AOPA Member Toolkit for Media Outreach*

## **Using the Media to Raise Awareness of your Company!**

This toolkit will help you fine-tune your message, increase your media savvy and enhance the visibility of your company. Working with the media can help draw attention to your company and assist in influencing policymakers.

Media coverage is important because it carries your message to a much larger audience than you can reach by yourself. The media influences many people – the public, youth, parents, community leaders, educators, health care professionals, businesses, and elected officials at all levels of government. With some media savvy, you will be able to draw positive attention to your company and identify supporters of orthotic and prosthetic (O&P) issues.

The media can serve as a forum where you can explain the complexities of orthotic and prosthetic care and the benefits of O&P devices in a thoughtful and factual manner.

There are many parts to working with the media. This toolkit addresses how to:

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### **How Do I Draw Positive Attention to My Company?**

Media love to cover “feel good” human interest stories and events. Do you have a patient with a compelling story whose life has been positively impacted by your work? Ask the patient if he or she would be interested in being part of a media story. The goal is to make your company and your work very personal so that it resonates with the public.

Events are another great way to get positive media coverage and raise awareness about your company. What are good events? Host an open house and invite patients, media and policymakers to tour your company facilities and learn more about your services. Offer a day of free O&P fittings, give a lecture on the different types of O&P products, or hold a workshop and let patients test different O&P technologies. Make your news event count. Be sure to have a specific objective before you seek media coverage and know what message you want reporters to walk away with.

Finally, you can attract attention by piggybacking on other news stories. Act quickly to link your issue to other breaking news. Did a state pass prosthetic parity legislation? Write an op-ed or letter to the editor about why your state needs similar legislation. Piggyback on national stories by emphasizing their importance to local residents. National and local anniversaries are also a



great way to highlight your issues. For example, November is National Diabetes month. Use the month and/or local Diabetes walks as platforms to highlight the number of diabetics who are amputees.

### **Sending Out a Media Advisory**

Media advisories serve as invitations to events and should be sent to the local media the week before your event. Your advisory should not exceed one page and it must include a contact name (someone from your company who can answer questions from the press) and specifics about the time and location of the event. You should also include two to three sentences about your program plans, any special services your company will be offering that day and why the event is newsworthy. Whether emailed, faxed or hand delivered, be sure to send the media advisory on your company's letterhead.

After you send out the media advisory, call each contact to follow up. Reporters receive many pieces of information in a given day and you want to be sure to highlight your event. Note that you may receive media calls before the event from journalists who want to know more before deciding whether or not to cover the event.

#### **Some easy rules when calling reporters:**

- First, ask the reporter if they are on a deadline. Calling earlier in the day is usually better than late afternoon when reporters will be rushing to finish stories.
- Briefly outline the purpose of your event, the issues you will cover and the event schedule.
- Ask what interests the reporter.
- Ask the reporter if they will be able to cover the event and, if not, see if they would be interested in interviewing a company spokesperson before or after the event.

**After the event:** Do not neglect post-event publicity. If media do not respond to your advisories or are unable to cover your event, still send them photos and captions after the fact.

***See an example media advisory in Appendix A***

### **Writing a Press Release**

A press release is a pseudo news story that demonstrates the newsworthiness of an event, opinion or product to an editor or reporter. Press releases are written in the third person and can either be sent alone by email or fax or included in a press kit.

#### **Press releases have five main elements.**

1. **The headline.** State your most exciting news, finding or announcement in as few words as possible. Try to emulate the headlines you read every day.
2. **The subhead.** Subheads give you the opportunity to flesh out your angle and further hook the reporter, without the length limitations of the release headline.



3. **The lead.** The lead paragraph needs to include the who, what, when, where and how of the story. If the reporter were only to read the lead of a good press release, he or she would have everything necessary to get started on a story.
4. **The body.** The body of the press release needs to back up whatever claims were made in the headline and the lead paragraph. Quotes can be used to add personality, perspective and expertise.
5. **The boilerplate.** Your final paragraph should include boilerplate language about your company, company history and what you do.

**Things to remember:**

- Send the press release on company letterhead.
- Include your contact information at the top of the release.
- Always write the release from the journalists' perspective. Do not use first person pronouns.
- Stay away from bloated phrases like "state-of-the-art" and "breakthrough."
- Shorter is better.
- Center three number signs (###) at the end of your release to notify the reader that release is ending.
- If you send the release via email, insert the text into the email message instead of adding an attachment as journalists often ignore attachments.
- As with media advisories, follow up with reporters and offer to provide more information.

*See an example press release in Appendix B*

**Creating a Press Kit for an Event**

Press kits come in all shapes and sizes. They can be as simple as a news release attached to a fact sheet or many sheets packaged in folders. Journalists will use press kits to get the background information they need to write an article about your company or event. Your press kit could include:

- The most recent **news release**, including your contact information. (Don't assume reporters will bring the release with them to the event).
- **Fact sheets** with official sources for all facts and figures.
- List of event **speakers and participants**, including brief bios and their contact information.
- Informational **fliers or brochures** about your company.
- Copies of **articles** written about your company or letters to the editor and op-eds that you have had published.
- **Background information** on your company and the issue you are highlighting with your event.

Prepare enough press kits for any media you expect to cover your event and have them near the entrance. Send a complete media kit to reporters who expressed an interest in your event, but



were unable to attend. They may not use the press kit immediately, but they can keep it for future reporting they do on O&P issues.

### **Giving a Good Interview**

Being interviewed does not have to be scary. It's actually easy if you break down your efforts into simple steps beforehand.

- **Talking points.** Always go into an event or interview with *three key messages or talking points* that you want to make. Then *make them*, no matter what questions are asked.
- **Bridge** to your key messages or talking points. If a question seems off topic, bring it back around to *what you want to say*. For example, you might bridge by saying, "That's an interesting question. However, I think the real issue is (insert your media message/talking point)...Don't miss the chance to communicate what you want people to know.
- **Anticipate questions.** Write them down and write out the answers to each. Practice answering them in front of mirror.
- **Listen to the question carefully.** If you did not understand the question, ask the reporter to repeat the question or to clarify what he/she meant. Even when bridging, do not evade tough questions on your issue.
- **Be concise.** Give answers that are *10 to 15 seconds* in length, and always speak in complete sentences. Speaking in complete, short sentences means reporters will not mistake your message or edit it into something else. So, it is less likely that your words will be taken out of context.
- **Be energetic and show passion for your story.** Voice tone and body language comprise more than 90 percent of how your message is heard.
- **Do not lie.** If you do not know an answer to a question, *don't make something up*. It is okay to say, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure." Always offer to find the answer. Then be sure to get back to the reporter *before* his/her deadline.
- **Remember, there is no such thing as "off the record."** Reporters will appreciate you as a valued source for background or leads on your company or the O&P industry. Keep in mind that anything you say can be quoted and often will be.
- **Know the deadline.** Be sure to ask the reporter's deadline for finishing the piece. Then make sure requested follow-up information, statistics, or quotes are sent to the reporter prior to the deadline.



### **Should I Approach Print Media Differently from Electronic Media?**

*Yes and No!* Short, concise answers are better with all types of media. However, there are differences in the ways television or radio and print media will cover your event or issue. You will have less time to make your points in a television or radio interview than with print. The “30-second sound bite” is the goal of television and radio. While print reporters have more flexibility to provide background information on your issue and to include their own narrative in setting up the issue, your quotes should still be short, concise, and punchy.

### **How Do I Work with Print Media?**

In addition to being interviewed for a newscast or feature story, there are other ways to get your issue covered by a newspaper, including (from easiest to hardest): writing a *letter to the editor* about something that appeared in the newspaper, submitting an *op-ed* piece (a column giving your point of view on an issue), or getting the newspaper to publish an *editorial* in support of your issue. All of these are published solely at the discretion of the paper’s editors.

### **Writing Letters to the Editor (LTE’s)**

The Letters to the Editor section is the most widely read section of a newspaper after the front page. The high readership offers you a cost-effective way to increase the visibility of your issue and to spread your message. A letter to the editor is usually written in *response* to a published article, an opinion piece, or current news. As a result, a letter to the editor must be *timely*.

**Strategy :** Be sure to remember the “**five C’s**” when composing a letter to the editor.

1. **Current** – Do not wait more than two days after the publication of the article to send in a letter to the editor. Better still, e-mail or fax the letter the same day the article appeared. (Call to find out which method the newspaper prefers.)
2. **Concise** – Make sure to keep your letter short (under 250 words) and to the point.
3. **Controversial** – Question another’s position but avoid personal attacks.
4. **Contagious** – Send your letter to several newspapers, but be sure to first to check their policies on multiple submissions. For example, if *The New York Times* agrees to publish your letter, make sure you haven’t sent it to any other newspaper. You can always encourage other people to write letters to the editor.
5. **Include Your Contact Information.** The newspaper will need verification that you are real or may need more information before it will publish your letter.

***See an example letter to the editor in Appendix C***



## Writing an Op-Ed

'Op-ed' means "opposite the editorial page." An op-ed is an opinion piece used to make the case for your issue. Op-eds are usually no longer than 700 to 750 words, typewritten and double spaced. Sentences should be short and effective (10 or 11 words maximum). Since publishing an op-ed is solely at the discretion of the newspaper's editors, it is important to make your op-ed stand out. Also make sure that all names are spelled correctly and all quotations are accurate. Here is a guide to writing an effective op-ed:

**A. Strategy :** Be concise, address only one point and avoid jargon or technical phrases.

- **Set the goal of the op-ed.** What are you trying to achieve? Do you wish to raise public awareness about the impact of your issue? Do you want to argue for or against a specific policy? Do you want to take your issue and put a different slant on it?
- **Define the audience.** Are you trying to reach your neighbors, local, state or federal policy makers, public health officials, amputee advocates, or someone else?
- **Identify the appropriate newspaper.** Send your op-ed piece to the local or national paper most likely to reach your desired audience.
- **Verify the style.** Read recent published op-eds to see which style the newspaper prefers.
- **Determine the best time for placement.** Is an important policy vote on O&P issues coming up before a policy making body, such as the city council, state legislature, or Congress? Is a report being released that you think deserves attention? These can be "hooks" for your op-ed piece. On the other hand, if a breaking news situation occurs that may divert attention from your op-ed issue, you may want to wait to submit it.
- **Identify an original angle.** How can you draw attention to your issue or bring a new perspective to its coverage? Your thinking needs to be original, creative, and fresh.

**B. Content:** The following four pieces are essential parts of an effective op-ed.

1. **The attention-grabber** – An op-ed should always start with an effective attention-getter.
  - a. **Use humor.** Use an anecdote or joke and relate it directly back to the issue you are discussing.
  - b. **Talk about people.** Talk about yourself and other specific individuals related to your company to help the reader identify with you and subject.
  - c. **Keep it current.** An op-ed must be about a current issue. Talk about something specific that happened recently and relates to O&P issues.
  - d. **Cite** an alarming statistic to grab the reader's attention.
2. **The body of the op-ed, a.k.a. "the chain of evidence"** – After the opener, move immediately to clearly state the issue and where you stand. This entails writing a few paragraphs that offer arguments in support of the main point. The "body of evidence" may include:



- a. **Statistics:** Easy to explain with clear, numerical analyses, but not too many; (don't drown the reader in statistics)
  - b. **Quotes:** From authorities, especially from public figures or well known community members in support of your company or issue
  - c. **Agency positions:** The position of a known governing agency on the issue
  - d. **Analogies:** To connect ideas for readers who may not be familiar with the issue
  - e. **Case studies:** Use human stories and real anecdotes to make the issue concrete and memorable for people.
3. **The conclusion** – Briefly sum up your point.
  4. **The goodbye zinger** – This is a counterpart to the attention grabber and hammers home your message.

**C. Submitting an op-ed:** Review the following guidelines when submitting your op-ed.

- Submit your op-ed via e-mail to larger newspapers or via fax to smaller papers. Call first to ascertain which the editors prefer.
- Follow up with a phone call to ensure the paper received the op-ed and to provide additional information if needed by the editor or the newspaper.
- Be sure to include your company or other affiliation, day and evening phone numbers, and your e-mail address.

*See an example op-ed in Appendix D*

### **Generating a Newspaper Editorial**

A newspaper editorial is a powerful piece of media because it represents an endorsement of your issue by the newspaper itself. Generating an editorial requires convincing the newspaper editorial board (usually composed of the newspaper's editors and the news/health reporters who cover your issue) of the validity of your position on an issue and/or giving the board a solid reason to support your issue.

- **Learn the names** of the editors and writers who cover health reform, amputees, or O&P issues. Review the paper's previous editorials on your issue, if any.
- **Schedule an editorial meeting** or a time to discuss the issue over the phone. Be polite. Introduce yourself and your company.
- **Brainstorm tough questions on your issue.** Part of the editorial board's job is to challenge your position. Be prepared to counter any arguments.
- **Prepare materials to leave with the board after the meeting.** These materials should explain your position, provide facts on the issue and contain a list of contacts for follow-up.
- **Explain your issue** simply; tell why it is newsworthy and why it is important that it be covered NOW.



- **Plan your arguments** and practice them. Keep your points brief (one to two minutes) and be prepared to provide proof of any statistics and data you cite.
- **Offer to send further background information** and set up a time for follow-up.
- **Send the promised materials** and follow up as planned. Honor your commitments quickly and offer assistance.
- **Keep your issue hot.** Often, newspapers have a lot of news to cover, so find new angles and bring attention to newsworthy events and people. Because you are working in your community, your local paper could be especially interested in what you are doing.

### **Conducting Online/Digital Outreach**

Outreach to online media- specifically bloggers- is very different than reaching out to traditional media. Bloggers have strong personalities and relationships with bloggers must be developed and fostered before you pitch any information or stories to them.

#### **A. What is a blog?**

A blog is a Web site that contains commentary on trends, descriptions of events or other materials such as graphics, video, etc. Originally these sites were called 'Web logs', but are now commonly known as the contraction, a *blog*.

Social media is growing as the new-age forum for professional communications. The news industry is constantly shifting and, with the disappearance of print media, bloggers are proving to be a large and effective resource for raising awareness about an event or issue.

#### **B. Finding a good blog to follow**

Finding a credible blog takes some research. To get started, enter keywords like "*prosthetic, orthotic and amputee*" in blog search engines like <http://www.blogsearch.google.com> and <http://www.technorati.com>. Read several posts to verify the legitimacy of the blogger. Are they knowledgeable on O&P issues or health reform? When did they last post content? (Blogs that are worthy of following and engaging should regularly post new content). Also note who else is commenting on the blog. Are their comments constructive and educational? Take all angles into consideration when you begin forming a blog list.

#### **C. Blogger outreach**

1. **The two R's- Research and Read.** Make sure to do your homework about the blogger that you want to engage. Get to know the blogger's beat and style. Who is their audience? How does your company event or issue relate to the blog? Why would your issue be relevant to the blog's audience?
2. **Get organized.** Set up an RSS feed to specific blogs/bloggers. Use Google Reader and/or Mozilla's Feedly.com to organize the various blogs that you are following.





Both platforms funnel your blogs into a solitary place, making it easier to monitor new content instead of manually searching for the blogs on a daily basis.

3. **Interact.** Join the conversation. Make contact with the blogger by writing insightful, intelligent comments on their site. The longer you interact with a blogger prior to pitching a story, the better.
4. **Use Social Networks.** Use social networks like Twitter and Facebook to further the conversation with your blogger. Engaging bloggers on social networks will help you to build a stronger, multiplatform relationship with them.
5. **Help the blogger.** Give bloggers timely newsworthy information. Bloggers are experts in their fields and their posts can inspire widespread traditional media coverage. Offer bloggers articles or recent studies that are relevant to them and be prepared to provide further information. The more you help bloggers, the more likely it is that they will help you.

#### D. Ready to pitch?

Here are **five** key things to keep in mind about blogger protocol.

1. **Type of blog**
  - a. Commercial sites: Look for specific submission specifications. There is usually a standard for most large sites.
  - b. Individual bloggers: Again, make sure to build a relationship with the blogger before pitching your story and that the blogger has not previously written on the *exact* issue.
2. **Relationship tools**
  - a. Follow the blogger on Twitter, RT (re-tweet) their posts.
  - b. Share their story in a Facebook group and then let them know.
  - c. Target them with a “Note” on Facebook and include them in your conversation.
  - d. Personalize your message for each targeted blogger. **DO NOT MASS E-MAIL!**
3. **Transparency**

Of all the things to learn, transparency is of the utmost importance. Bloggers do not take kindly to those individuals who are not transparent and honest. Always maintain transparency! When pitching, specifically state:

  - a. Who you are
  - b. Organization you work for
  - c. Goal of your outreach
4. **Follow-up**

Do not pester your blogger. Send one e-mail and leave it alone.



#### 5. **After the fact**

Build on your newly established foundation and continue to maintain the relationship with your blogger. Send tips along to the blogger as you come across them and continually monitor the dialogue that the blogger is participating in and/or facilitating.

### **E. Writing Your Own Blog**

- When writing a blog, keep in mind that a blog post is not an essay or research report. Try to keep the human element in your writing and *bring character* to your piece. Do not get caught up in too much jargon and be sure to research your references and sources.
- Be as *concise* as possible, allow the reader to gain the maximum amount of information in as little text as possible.
- Use *catchy headlines and hyperlinks* to add interest and integrity to your post. ALWAYS use attribution when citing others' work as the Internet can become a very small place at the click of a Google Search button.
- Once your blog post is live, use various social networking sites to *traffic your post* and share the wealth. (I.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)

### **F. What are social networks?**

Social networks are online communities that provide a variety of ways for users to interact and share information. Social networking sites are being used regularly by millions of people. Facebook and Twitter are two of the most widely used social networks in the United States.

#### 1. **What is Facebook?**

Facebook is one of the largest growing social networks on the Web today. The original network was solely based for college students, but the network was later opened up to all users. Facebook's functionality has grown throughout the years and the network now includes corporate forums and advocacy, activism and collective cause groups etc. If you can dream it, Facebook has a function for it.

Facebook can connect people from around the world or target a specific geographic community. The web of people that can be reached through a social network like Facebook creates a 'viral' quality of promotion that cannot be produced in any other way.

AOPA is active on Facebook. Join the [AOPA group](#) or become [a fan of AOPA](#). Just go to <http://www.facebook.com/> and in the top, right corner search for "American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association."

#### 2. **What is Twitter?**



Twitter is a social network that is classified as a 'micro blog'. Users “tweet” updates and share information. There is only a 140 character allowance for each post or “tweet.” Media now use Twitter to break news stories and monitor the network for other story leads.

Twitter is a useful tool in awareness and advocacy campaigns because it can drive traffic to Web sites or expand an online dialogue. Twitter can be used to leverage your relationships with journalists and bloggers, as many of them are active on Twitter. It can also be used to uphold and advance corporate relations with your audience.

AOPA is also on Twitter. Follow AOPA's updates at <http://twitter.com/AmericanOandP>

### **Advertisement for Local Media**

Attached is a copy of an advertisement that each AOPA member is entitled to use for local media outreach. Members are encouraged to place the advertisement in local and regional newspapers and magazines in order to promote the quality care to patients that they provide at their facility. In the lower-left corner of the advertisement there is space so that the member may include their name, the address of their patient care facility and contact information.

***See Advertisement in Appendix E***



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**Appendix A- Sample Media Advisory**



**AMERICAN  
ORTHOTIC & PROSTHETIC  
ASSOCIATION**  
SERVING THE O&P FIELD FOR OVER 90 YEARS

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(Date)

CONTACT:  
(Your name)  
(Your phone number)

**LOCAL PROSTHETIC COMPANY HOSTS OPEN HOUSE FOR POLICYMAKERS**

**WHAT:** (Your Company Name) will host (name of Legislator).

**WHEN:** (Date and Time of Event)

**WHO:** (Your Company Name) is a locally owned patient care facility. (Your Company Name) is part of a specialized healthcare community of more than 3,000 facilities that treat upwards of 1 million patients each year. Our facility here in (city) has been in operation for (X) years—we have (Y) employees, and in an average month, we treat (Z) patients with limb loss and limb differences.

**WHY:** The real story behind Olympic-caliber athletes with prosthetic limbs and wounded soldiers who are rehabilitated and able to, once again, jump from planes begins every day in O&P facilities like ours. However, the top two reasons for amputations are diabetes and peripheral vascular disease, causes that aren’t covered as regularly by the media. Most of our orthotic patients come to us because of conditions like cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy or spinal bifida. With deliberations pending on major health care issues, we want the media and our elected representatives to have a strong understanding of what is involved in our work and how we help restore mobility, independence and pride in our patients. Please join us as we host (name of Legislator) for 60-90 minutes on (insert date). Participate as (name of Legislator) meets our employees and a few of our patients, and see why we are so proud of the role we play in helping our patients.

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## **Appendix B- Sample Press Release**



**AMERICAN  
ORTHOTIC & PROSTHETIC  
ASSOCIATION**  
SERVING THE O&P FIELD FOR OVER 90 YEARS

## **P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

### **Media Contacts:**

Steven Rybicki  
(571) 431-0835

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 28, 2009

### **AOPA APPLAUDS INTRODUCTION OF PROSTHETIC AND CUSTOM ORTHOTIC PARITY ACT OF 2009**

#### **Parity Act Necessary to Overcome Coverage Barriers, Assure Access to O&P Devices**

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) supports the introduction of the Prosthetic and Custom Orthotic Parity Act of 2009 (PCOPA). This important legislation will assure access to appropriate orthotic and prosthetic devices by providing fair insurance coverage. PCOPA, H.R. 2575, was introduced by Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) with bipartisan support from five original cosponsors.

If passed, PCOPA will reduce access barriers to appropriate patient care such as restricted insurance coverage and payment caps on prosthetic and custom orthotic devices. Increasing insurance coverage of and patient access to the appropriate orthotic and prosthetic device will enhance patient outcome by increasing mobility, confidence and limit secondary health issues stemming from improper care and lessening the burden on Medicare and Medicaid. In a statement from the House floor, Rep. Andrews discussed the necessity of this legislation, stating that “at a time when health care costs are rising by about 7 percent annually, the financial hardship on those in need of prosthetic and custom orthotic devices is devastating.”

“Currently, there is a significant health insurance inequity facing Americans with decreased mobility due to injury or amputation,” said AOPA President Brian Gustin, CP. “Millions will benefit when insurance companies fairly cover prosthetic and custom orthotic services at the same level as they do for medical and surgical services.” AOPA recognizes and commends the excellent efforts in leading this legislative endeavor by the Amputee Coalition of America (ACA). ACA accomplished the introduction of the original House and Senate parity bills in the last Congress. AOPA is proud to be partnering with the Amputee Coalition of America and nearly 25 other stakeholder groups in the disability field to champion passage of this critical piece of legislation.

Last month, AOPA members and other advocates came to Capitol Hill to encourage Members of Congress to support PCOPA and H.R. 2479, the Medicare Orthotic and Prosthetic Improvements Act of 2009 also introduced last week, which, if passed, will link Medicare reimbursement with the qualifications of the provider correlated to the device the patient needs.



Largely because of the excellent advocacy efforts of the ACA, the issue of O&P parity has also gained importance across the country at the state level. The state legislatures in Iowa, Maryland, and Texas have all passed parity legislation in the past month. In total, sixteen states have enacted parity laws to ensure access to prosthetic and orthotic devices. Those states have found minimal or no increases to insurance premiums and have also reduced Medicaid and Medicare costs. Thirty other states are actively considering prosthetic and custom orthotic parity legislation.

#### **ABOUT AOPA**

The American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA), based in Alexandria, Virginia, is the largest non-profit organization dedicated to helping O&P businesses and professionals navigate the multitude of business issues surrounding the delivery of patient care. With nearly 2,000 members, AOPA has a nationwide presence within the O&P community. AOPA serves the O&P profession with consistent representation on Capitol Hill, premier publications, high-quality coding products, expert reimbursement guidance and a full slate of education programs on O&P-specific issues. Contact AOPA at (571) 431-0876 or visit the AOPA Web site at [www.AOPAnet.org](http://www.AOPAnet.org).

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## **Appendix C- Sample Letter to the Editor**

(Insert Date)

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to (X article) on (X date). As an O&P service provider, I see firsthand the emotional and monetary strains on families of people living with limb loss.

Federal prosthetic parity legislation will reduce access barriers to appropriate patient care such as restricted insurance coverage and payment caps on prosthetic and custom orthotic devices. Increasing insurance coverage of and patient access to the appropriate orthotic and prosthetic device will enhance patient mobility and limit secondary health issues stemming from improper care, thus lessening the burden on Medicare and Medicaid.

It is important to note that the current bill in Congress does not mandate that insurance offers prosthetics and orthotics, but says that if an insurer does offer either or both of them currently it will be on the same basis as the general medical and surgical coverage, without lesser caps, limits or restrictions.

Please join me in calling for Congress to pass federal prosthetic parity legislation.

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Town, State)



## Appendix D- Sample Op-Ed

Rob Kislow remembers the last time he saw his right leg. It was during an insurgent attack on his company in Afghanistan. (Insert Advocate Name) remembers too when a tractor accident stole all the strength from his left leg. Will Congress remember or even think about folks like these who have suffered limb loss or limb impairment when they seal the deal on health care reform?

The initial iterations of the health reform bills aren't too promising. The Senate HELP Committee and the House Ways & Means Committee didn't even provide an unambiguous assurance that a qualifying private plan would even need to offer any coverage for the orthotics and prosthetic devices that are indispensable to restoring these patients' mobility. Clearly, these patients deserve and insist, as the starting point, that any government standard private health insurance follows the lead of Medicare in providing coverage for the orthotic and prosthetic devices that are the sine qua non of their mobility and productivity. But they need more than that.

The Amputee Coalition of America, the patient advocacy organization that represents patients with limb loss, as well as other organizations that represent either orthotic patients or the professionals who are dedicated to treating these patients agree that at least two more components are required to protect the mobility of these patients. They want a federal orthotic and prosthetic parity provision. This is NOT a mandate to provide insurance, but it is more of a "truth in advertising" provision that says—if an insurer offers coverage for orthotics and/or prosthetics it must be on the same basis as that plan's general medical and surgical coverage. This would avoid the devastating situation where a recent amputee finds that the prosthetic provision in his employer-provided plan has fine print that provides only one prosthetic limb for life, or a \$1500 - \$2000 lifetime coverage limit. The Amputee Coalition has succeeded in gaining passage of parity legislation by seventeen state legislatures. They need the federal legislation to finish the job and to fill in the gaps because state legislation is powerless to regulate the ERISA plans that comprise about 50% of health insurance plans.

The second tenet of the legislative agenda for those with limb loss or impairment is a series of Medicare refinements aimed at stemming fraud and abuse and to assure that those who provide the orthotics and prosthetics that foster mobility have the needed qualifications, training and education. Far from costing the government anything, this second provision would actually save government money, eliminating costly, unproductive outlays to unscrupulous bad actors or under-qualified providers.

So, Rob Kislow and others like him fought through the burdens and challenges, regained their equilibrium and are productive, hard-working contributors to their communities. But each still remembers the day when his life changed so fundamentally. Many of us without limb loss or impairment admire folks like Rob Kislow, recognizing that 'there, but for the grace of God, go I.' The question is whether, amidst all the heady, contentious debate of health care reform, Members of Congress will take a moment themselves to remember constituents like Rob Kislow, and make sure that the modest measures that these noble neighbors need find their niche in the final health care reform legislation that Congress ultimately enacts.





## **Appendix E- Advertisement for Local Media**

Ever thought of advertising in your local newspaper to let potential patients know about your practice? We've made it easy. You will find attached a camera-ready advertising slick. If you like it, any AOPA member who is current in their AOPA dues is free to simply strip into the ad your practice name, address, and telephone number, and arrange with our newspaper's display ad department for payment and placement as you see appropriate. We can't pay the fee for you, but AOPA has done everything else to make this step in marketing your practice easy!