

Who Are Certified Orthotic and Prosthetic Providers, and What Do They Do for Patients?

Overcoming the loss of a leg from an Iraq tour of duty, this 27 year old transformed her challenge into remarkable accomplishments by being one of 18 women named to the U.S. Paralympic Swim Team and the first Iraq veteran selected for the games in Beijing.

A man in his mid-60s is confined to a wheelchair due to complications from a viral infection. After being fit with a new set of orthotic leg braces, he can participate in the physical therapy he needs to continue a healthy life.

It would be easy for an insurance, health care professional or even a patient not to understand orthotics and prosthetics or to misunderstand the services we provide. O&P, as we call it, is a very small component of America's health care system, only about 0.5 percent of Medicare expenditures. But if you are an amputee, diabetic or a patient with multiple sclerosis; you know a certified orthotist or prosthetist because they are often the individual most integral to your being able to move through your life optimally and with dignity.

What certified orthotists and prosthetists are not: We are not part of the medical supply (Durable Medical Equipment-DME) commodity marketplace. Unlike DME, virtually all of the products that we provide have in some manner been customized to the unique needs of the specific patient, generally in accordance with a physician's prescription. Implantable devices (e.g., knee replacements) are also not part of our services. We are not occupational or physical therapists whose services help the body self repair. Instead, the services and devices provided by O&P professionals augment surgery or therapy and provide permanence to restoring capabilities.

Unfortunately, the coverage provided in many health insurance policies doesn't fully recognize these needs or the long term value proposition of O&P services.

The value of what we deliver can be measured by:

- The dollars invested in O&P health care which generate measurable savings in reduced time patients spend in rehabilitation or incurring other health care costs due to falls or deteriorating health.
- The additional premiums required to provide adequate insurance coverage for prosthetic care is about 16 cents per beneficiary/per month...an incomparable bargain, in addition to the uncalculated benefits of improved quality of life, return to productive employment and further savings in health care costs.

O&P is a proud, contributing component of America's health care system, ready to serve those who need the unique talent and skills we can deliver in restoring mobility and independence to patients.



American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association

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