

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
ORTHOTICS AND PROSTHETICS OUTCOMES RESEARCH PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2026 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST

FY '26 Request: \$15 Million to Fund the Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program and Define O&P Research as Also Eligible for Funding under the Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program.

Background: In 2014, Congress established the Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program (OPORP) in the U.S. Department of Defense to support research and evaluate prosthetic limbs and orthotic braces meant to improve the health and well-being of servicemembers, Veterans, and other individuals with limb loss or limb impairment.

- Limb amputation and musculoskeletal injury are key combat- and active duty-related injuries. OPORP research leads to identification of the most effective prosthetic and orthotic treatments to maximize patient benefit, increase the likelihood of return to service, return to work, and fosters full recovery post-limb loss or limb impairment. CDMRP is the agency in DOD that focuses on the OPORP's specific research priorities, administers its funding, and evaluates the outcomes of research undertaken.
- Congress appropriates funding for CDMRP programs like OPORP on an annual basis. In FY 2014, OPORP was funded at \$10 million. Funding grew over time and in FY 2023, it received an appropriation of \$15 million¹ based on recognition that the benefits of its research extend beyond the use of prostheses and orthoses used by individuals who have experienced traumatic injury.
- OPORP research also benefits over two million individuals in the U.S. with limb loss or limb impairment due to vascular disease and other chronic conditions. Orthotics are also frequently used to help individuals with paralysis function more effectively and survivors of stroke walk more efficiently and safely.

Explanation of Need: According to CDMRP, increases in OPORP's appropriations since 2014 have allowed the program to expand its research focus from traumatic injury (relevant to active-duty military) to other reasons for limb loss and limb impairment of particular relevance to veterans as they age.

- These are critical conditions caused by diabetes, stroke, neuropathy, and infection that can result in limb loss or impairment and require the use of prosthetic or orthotic devices. In fact, in the OPORP Strategic Plan released in 2023, CDMRP noted the leading cause of amputation in the U.S. is vascular disease (54%), followed by trauma (45%) and cancer (~1%).
- OPORP is the only federally supported research funding available for researchers to study O&P outcomes that lead to improvements in care and maximize the health care investment in prosthetic and orthotic services.

¹ The Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program received \$20 million in FY 2022.

Reason for Request: Regardless of the conditions that cause limb loss or impairment, orthotics and prosthetics have dramatically improved through technological advancements over time.

- However, there remains an urgent need to evaluate orthotic and prosthetic interventions to identify those that provide the greatest positive impact on users' health status, functionality, and quality of life. It is particularly important to identify the most effective orthoses or prostheses to meet individuals' unique needs and limit the unnecessary use of health care resources.
- The O&P Alliance, comprised of the five national organizations listed below, seeks to improve the practice and quality of O&P treatments for all those in need. For this reason, we respectfully request (1) \$15 million for Fiscal Year 2026 to fund the CDMRP's OPORP account and (2) legislative language to establish O&P outcomes research among the priorities of the Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program consistent with the FY 2025 Senate report before this language was eliminated due to the year-long CR.
- Since 2014, OPORP has helped develop at least 3 patents, 75 publications, 128 presentations, and 6 follow-on studies dedicated to improving the care and lives of those who utilize orthotics and prosthetics. This bolus of research has helped shape prosthetic and orthotic clinical practice to improve outcomes for patients and has developed a cadre of O&P researchers who, with sufficient research funding, will continue to improve outcomes for decades to come.

Proposed Legislative Language: To facilitate the enactment of appropriate support for O&P outcomes research in Fiscal Year 2026, the following bill and/or report language is provided as a starting point to direct Congress to take action to 1) reestablish specific funding for O&P outcomes research under OPORP; and 2) ensure that O&P outcomes research may be undertaken under the Peer Reviewed account as well. We respectfully suggest the following legislative language:

- “The Committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) to continue research on orthotics and prosthetics outcomes needed to improve care for servicemembers and others with limb loss and impairment. To this end, \$15 million is hereby appropriated to fund the Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program (OPORP) as its own line item within the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP). In addition, prosthetic and orthotic outcomes research is also to be identified as an area of research eligible to be funded by the CDMRP's Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program. In all CDMRP Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research, the Committee encourages the Assistant Secretary to include evidence-based practices that can evaluate which orthotic and prosthetic interventions can provide the most improvement in servicemembers' health status, functionality, quality of life, and be consistent with the Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program's long-range strategic plan published by the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs in 2023.”

The member organizations of the O&P Alliance referenced above and identified below stands strongly in support of these efforts to sustain and support Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research.

- [American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists](#)
- [American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics](#)
- [American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association](#)
- [Board for Certification/Accreditation](#)
- [National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics](#)