



**American Orthotic &
Prosthetic Association**

Support for Implementation of Orthotic & Prosthetic Parity Legislation

Limitations on insurance coverage for prostheses (artificial limbs) and orthoses (braces) continue to impede the reasonable provision of these devices to those in need. Presently, some individuals who need such care are unable to obtain it due to arbitrary limitations in their insurance coverage for orthotic and prosthetic devices.

While Medicare, the largest federal insurer, provides comprehensive prosthetic and orthotic coverage, many private insurers either do not cover these devices or limit coverage with unrealistic caps. For example, an insurer may only cover one limb per lifetime or not cover any repairs or replacements to a device. This hurts all amputees, but is especially difficult for children who need successive limbs due to growth.

Another example of coverage limitations is the imposition of a very low annual financial cap. This means that a patient who develops a new condition or whose condition has changed may not be able to obtain the new brace that he needs, because he has already reached and more than likely exceeded the cap for that year.

For amputees and those needing orthoses the lack of coverage or limitations on coverage often prevents them from leading full and productive lives. In addition, not having access to appropriate devices can lead to costly co-morbidities due to the imposed sedentary lifestyle. These conditions can include orthopedic problems, obesity, diabetes, and peripheral vascular disease.

To combat this problem, many states are implementing legislative solutions to ensure coverage of orthoses and prostheses to the same degree that other surgical and medical care is available. Another important factor when such legislation is considered is to assure that orthotic/prosthetic patients have a suitable choice of providers, so that insurance programs do not significantly constrain patient access to the provider of their choice. Currently, eight states have passed legislation ensuring prosthetic or prosthetic and orthotic coverage. According to the Amputee Coalition of America, 22 additional states are actively working to advance prosthetic and/or orthotic parity legislation.

The cost perception problem

Opponents of such legislation are concerned about the cost of this coverage. People assume that increasing insurance coverage means the amount they have to pay for insurance will go up. Some insurance companies want people to believe that this increase would be excessive to the point that people would have to cancel coverage because they would not be able to afford the premiums.

However, this coverage is not costly because the number of patients that need this care is small. A study of prosthetic parity by the California Benefits Review Program determined that the estimated cost to each insured to institute comprehensive coverage for prosthetics would be 16 cents per month. The Colorado Department of Health Policy and Financing found that prosthetic coverage would increase insureds' out-of-pocket costs by as little as 12 cents per member per month.

The cost of not providing orthotic and prosthetic care to patients can be much more costly. If these patients are prevented from accessing the care needed to continue to be productive members of society, they are often forced to become reliant on public programs such as Medicaid. In addition, complications such as flexion contractures, skin breakdown, osteoporosis, muscle loss, depression, and costs for nursing home or home care can all far exceed the costs of providing orthotic and prosthetic care to patients.

Savings also come from patients not having to make use of unemployment insurance, due to the increased function they can achieve by using orthotic and prosthetic devices. Such improvements in function, in conjunction with training, rehabilitation and counseling programs, helps patients lead more active and healthy lives. In a Fact Sheet available on their Web site, the Amputee Coalition of America states that, "every dollar spent on rehabilitation, including prosthetic care, saves more than \$11 in disability insurance."

For these reasons, AOPA strongly supports orthotic and prosthetic parity legislation.

For more information contact the American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA) at (571) 431-0876 or www.AOPAnet.org.