



**American Orthotic &
Prosthetic Association**

3rd Quarter 2015 Staff Report

To: AOPA Board of Directors
From: Thomas F. Fise, Executive Director
Date: October 28, 2015

Subject: Talk about an issue that got everybody's attention, the DME MAC's publication of the Local Coverage Determination Policy Article on Lower Limb Prosthetics that would consign amputees to a 1970s standard of care did precisely that. Former Senator Bob Kerrey described it as "a case of the government creating a problem rather than solving it." He also said, "My sincere recommendation is to throw the entire thing out: rescind this Draft LCD and begin a discussion with stakeholder groups to resolve any concerns that CMS may have with the prosthetic benefit." The Veteran's Administration joined the entire O&P profession and our amputee patients in requesting rescission of the proposed policy revisions. The White House in response to the "We the People" petition process and other actions such as the amputee rally at HHS announced on November 2nd "that the DME MACs will not finalize the draft Lower Limb Prostheses LCD at this time." Instead according to CMS, an interagency Workgroup will be formed, "comprised of clinicians, researchers, policy specialists, and patient advocates from different federal agencies." Outright rescission is still AOPA's goal. Included in this report is the action plan AOPA's Board approved within 48 hours of the LCD's July 16th publication. On other matters, of course Washington continues the gridlock pattern with little major legislation moving until after the 2016 election except possibly a budget deal that might provide longer term assurance against a government shutdown.

LCD Battle Pushed Toward Rescinding Entire Document

While calling for deep sixing the original LCD proposed revisions, AOPA and the O&P Alliance partners joined by the Amputee Coalition offered every possible opportunity for cooperation in working with the DME MACs and CMS in finding solution to the basic problems CMS is trying to solve which one suspects is all about the money. Members of Congress, in addition to former Senator Bob Kerrey, similarly urged CMS and its contractors to engage O&P organizations and other stakeholders in seeking a constructive solution.

Every AOPA member should be aware of the intensity with which this issue was addressed. No effort was spared in making sure this LCD did not see the light of day in its present form. Here's the game plan devised by your Board of Directors that guided AOPA's actions.

- Tapped the AOPA Coding and Reimbursement Committee’s expertise in shaping AOPA’s response to proposed LCD Lower Extremity Prosthetics proposed revisions which occurred at an August 3rd meeting in AOPA offices. The CRC views were critical aspects of comments submitted by AOPA.
- Accelerated the Prosthetics 2020 project to assure Medical Advisory Board members were prepared to be spokespersons for AOPA’s position on the LCD which occurred through conference calls and meetings with CMS officials and subsequent participation in a media alert.
- Two significant meetings took place with CMS officials, the first on August 11th with CMS Deputy Administrator Sean Cavanaugh and another on August 26th with Acting CMS Administrator Slavitt and other top CMS executives in conjunction with the Amputee Rally that same day.
- AOPA rolled out the “glass ceiling” video presentation for Mobility Saves website as well as ad placement on Sunday morning talk shows which became a key component of print and broadcast media outreach to augment the message of the Amputee Rally on how the proposed LCD reverts amputee patients to a 1970s standard of care.
- Activated visible patient presence in addition to Amputee Rally by facilitating patient messages to legislators and comments to DME MAC’s resulting in 2,700 patient messages of opposition. The president of the Amputee Coalition participated with AOPA representatives in a press conference that triggered more than 400 media mentions in TV and print stories plus incredible social media exposure. AOPA members received more than 10,000 postcards for distribution to patients for submitting their comments.
- AOPA engaged legal expertise to examine the legality of how the LCD was developed which resulted in AOPA’s formal comments submitted to the DME MAC’s raising this issue. AOPA is taking exception to the legality of such sweeping changes issued simultaneously by all four DME MACs as being beyond the scope of a Local Coverage Determination process and asserting it should have been a CMS policy determination following CMS procedures rather than DME MAC procedures..
- Intensified effort to make Mobility Saves website the patient portal for education on the LCD’s harm to patients and gaining active participation in opposing the LCD’s implementation.
- Separately reactivated AOPA’s earlier opposition to the Proof of Delivery Rules that were incorporated into the LCD proposed revisions. AOPA generated a request to CMS’ Dr. Shantanu Agrawal and Laurence Wilson accompanied by legal memoranda challenging the Proof of Delivery policy. This was delivered to the CMS officials separate from the LCD, but it was also attached to AOPA’s LCD comments.

These actions are a basic summary of how AOPA and the O&P community initially responded but efforts continue to make sure the proposed LCD revisions do not become formal policy. It’s interesting to note that the National Assembly keynote speaker, Lt. Colonel Donald Gajewski (RET) volunteered his own opinion on the proposal saying, “nothing makes me more mad than our government turning around and doing exactly what you said,” in response to an audience comment about CMS trying to deprive amputees of the most appropriate and advanced technology – which was developed at taxpayers’ expense for our wounded troops.

A disturbing development was the United Healthcare announcement shortly after the LCD proposal was released that followed the proposal’s policy on vacuum assisted suspension systems declaring in a letter to the Amputee Coalition that VASS “unproven and not medically necessary due to insufficient clinical evidence of safety and/or efficacy in published peer-reviewed medical literature.”

The letter went on to say, “We will review new clinical evidence supporting the use of VASS annually and reassess our position based upon the evolution of published clinical evidence or any future finalized guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.”

AOPA has raised concerns with members of Congress and CMS over the further likelihood that other insurers will take at face value the proposals in the LCD and follow provisions that could further impede amputees’ ability to get the most appropriate technology.

2015 O&P PAC Supporters & Contributions

As a reminder, The O&P PAC is the political action committee representing you and the O&P community on Capitol Hill and provides you with a means of increasing the visibility and recognition of orthotic and prosthetic services among legislators. It allows individuals to unite and pool their resources to support candidates for federal office who understand the crucial role of O&P in the health care delivery system.

Thanks to the following individuals for their contributions directly to the O&P PAC in 2015.

Michael Allen, CPO, FAAOP	Mehdi Arani	Thierry Arduin
Vinit Asar	Rudy Becker	Kel Bergmann, CPO
Frank Bostock, CO	Haley Branch, CPO	Daniel Busch, CO
Erin Cammaratta	Jim Campbell, PhD., CO, FAAOP	Matt Carroll
Jeff Collins, CPA	Kenneth Cornell, CO	Charles Dankmeyer, CPO
Don DeBolt	Joseph DeLorenzo, CP	Thomas DiBello, CO, FAAOP
David Edwards, CPO, FAAOP	Thomas F. Fise, JD	Rick Fleetwood, MPA
Wesley Haygood, CP	Robert Hellner, CPO	Ralph Hooper, CPO
David Hughes, CPO	Alfred Kritter, CPO, FAAOP	Teri Kuffel, Esq.
Charles Kuffel, CPO, FAAOP	Sam Liang	Anita Liberman-Lamphear, MA
Eileen Levis	Pam Lupo, CO	Jeff Lutz, CPO
David Mahler, CPO	Brad Mattear, CPA	Catherine Mize, CPO
Chris Nolan	Michael Oros, CPO, FAAOP	Mark Porth, CPO, FAAOP
Walter Racette, CPO	Ricardo Ramos, CP, Cped.	Jack Richmond, Cfo
Rick Riley	David Ritchie, Cped, CPO	John Roberts, CPO
Bradley Ruhl	Scott Schneider	Lisa Schoonmaker, CPO
Donald Shurr, CPO, PT	Sean Snell	Ronald Snell, CP
Jack Steele, CO, FAAOP	Gordon Stevens, CPO	Frank Vero, CPO
James Weber	Ashlie White	Eddie White, CP
Shane Wurdeman, PhD, MSPO, CP, FAAOP	Pam Young	Jim Young, CP, FAAOP

Thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to an O&P PAC sponsored events.

Maynard Carkhuff	Jim Campbell, PhD., CO, FAAOP
Jeff Collins	Charles Dankmeyer, CPO
Thomas F. Fise, JD	Hanger PAC
Anita Liberman-Lamphear, MA	Eileen Levis
Pam Lupo, CO	Chris Nolan
Michael Oros, CPO, FAAOP	PPSV PACr
Donald Shurr, CPO, PT	Scott Schneider

These lists cover the period from June 19, 2015 through October 23, 2015. If we missed your name please accept our apologies, and any contributions made or received after October 23, 2015 will be published in the next quarterly staff report.

As of October 15, 2015 the O&P PAC has contributed and supported the following members of Congress.

- **Rep. Tammy Duckworth** (D, IL 8th District), Member of the House Armed Services Committee and a current co-sponsor of HR 1530. Currently seeking election to the US Senate.
- **Sen. Grassley** (R-IA), Member of the Senate Finance Committee, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and sponsor of S.829.
- **Rep. Brett Guthrie** (R, KY 2nd District), Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee
- **Rep. Ann Kuster** (D, NH 2nd District), Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee
- **Rep. Mark Meadows** (R, NC 11th District) Original sponsor of HR 1526.
- **Rep. James Renacci** (R, OH 16th District), Member of the House Ways & Means Committee
- **Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger** (D, MD 2nd District) Member of the House Appropriations Committee
- **Rep. Glenn Thompson** (R, PA 5th District) Original sponsor of HR 1530
- **Rep. Mike Thompson** (D, CA 5th District) Member of the House Ways & Means Committee, and a co-sponsor of HR 1530

2015 Capitol Connection Supporters & Contributions

Capitol Connection is a fund established by AOPA to supplement and aid its government relations program and to cover any costs or expenditures that may not be covered by the general government relations budget. Typically funds from Capitol Connection help finance studies which support AOPA's legislative and regulatory positions. The funds are also used to create and distribute educational materials, and to help cover costs related to hosting the annual AOPA Policy Forum and maintain the AOPAVotes website.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for their recent contributions to and support of Capitol Connection.

Gordon Baker	Kent Baker	Kel Bergmann, CPO
Frank Bostock, CO	Tim Bulgarelli, CPO	Michael Carpenter
Matt Carroll	Jeff Collins	Thomas Costin
John Cronin	Michael Curtin	Thomas DiBello, CO, FAAOP
David Dillon, CP	Michael Dodd, BOCP, CO	David Edwards, CPO, FAAOP
Diane Farabi	Anthony Filippis, CPO	Rick Fleetwood, MPA
Elizabeth Ginzel, CPO	Paul Gudonis, MBA	Robert Hellner, CPO
James Kaiser, CP	Jim Kingsley, COO	Dixon LeGrande
Eileen Levis	Jeffrey Lutz, CPO	Clyde Massey, CPO
Bill Moore, Cped.	Martin Moore	Chris Nolan
Tim O'Neill	Michael Oros, CPO, FAAOP	Walter Racette, CPO
David Ritchie, Cped. CPO	John Roberts, CPO	Amelia Rosetta-Warren
Don Shurr, CPO, PT	Christopher Snell	Clint Snell
Sean Snell	Mike Sotak	Karla Spero
Jack Steele, CO, FAAOP	Gordon Stevens, CPO	Amelia Warren
Monty Warren	James Weber	Shane Wurdeman, PhD, MSPO, CP, FAAOP
Pam Young		

2015 AOPA National Assembly Government Relations Activities

The 8th Annual Wine Tasting & Auction took place on Thursday, October 8th during the 2015 AOPA National Assembly; and by all accounts was a huge success. The event was attended by more than 85 Assembly attendees and special emcees. Besides being a well-attended and fun evening the auction was able to raise a record amount

of funds, over \$43,000, for AOPA's government relations programs (Capitol Connection and the O&P PAC). The O&P PAC was also able to raise an additional \$3,000 via contributions of AOPA members during the Assembly.

AOPA and its government relations programs would like to thank the following individuals for donating their time, efforts and special items to the wine auction:

Rudy Becker	Kel Bergmann, CPO & Sue Bergmann
Frank Bostock, CO	Katie Brinkley
Jim Campbell, PhD., CO, FAAOP	Jeff Collins & Shane Collins
Thomas Costin	Charles Dankmeyer, CPO
Don DeBolt	Jehande LA BROSSE
Leslie DiBello	David Edwards, CPO, FAAOP
Kathy Edwards	George Easton
Meredith Eaton	Tom Fise, JD & Mary Ellen Fise
Rick Fleetwood, MPA	Zack Flores
Professor Hans Georg Näder	Jim Kingsley, COO
Al Kritter, CPO, FAAOP & Lynn Kritter	Anita Liberman-Lamphear & Alan Lamphear
Eileen Levis	Pam Lupo, CO
Jeffrey Lutz, CPO & Tara Lutz	Sara Lutz
Joe Martin	David McGill
Tina Moran	Michael Oros, CPO, FAAOP & Ann Oros
Walter Racette & Sandra Racette	Brad Ruhl & Lynn Ruhl
Scott Schneider & Cori Schneider	Don Shurr, CPO, PT
Mike Sotak	Frank Vero, CPO & Sheri Vero
Jim Weber & Diane Weber	Steve Whiteside, CO & Allison Whiteside

Legislative Update

Medicare Orthotics and Prosthetics Improvement Act of 2015 (S.829 and HR 1530)

The House version of the Medicare O&P Improvement Act of 2015 (HR 1530) was introduced on March 23, 2015 by Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and has been referred to the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health for review.

HR 1530 would require CMS to issue regulations under Section 427 of BIPA 2000, and it would further obligate CMS to implement the statutory directives approved in prior Congresses, namely: no payment to anyone who is not properly licensed in O&P in a state that has a license provision, and in states that have not enacted an O&P licensure statute, no payment under Medicare to any provider who does not meet the law's certification requirements.

HR 1530 and the Senate version of the Medicare O&P Improvement Act of 2015 (S. 829), which was also introduced on March 23, 2015 by Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) and is currently under review by the Senate Finance Committee, also addresses some of the more pressing concerns of the O&P community; including RAC audits and the ever narrowing definition of "minimal self-adjustment" for off-the-shelf orthoses. Provisions of the S.829 and/or HR 1530 would:

- Recognize the value of the Orthotist's or Prosthetist's notes in the medical record;
- Reinstate and strengthens the statutory definition of "Minimal Self Adjustment" for Off-the-Shelf Orthoses to protect Medicare beneficiaries;
- Distinguish Orthotic and Prosthetic patient care providers from Suppliers of Durable Medical Equipment (DME); and

- Require greater transparency and granularity in CMS reporting DME and O&P separately on claims denials and appeal results.
- Prohibit CMS or its contractors from recouping more than 50% of any overpayments in response to a RAC audit until an administrative law judge has rendered a decision.

If you have not already done so, please be sure to visit AOPAVotes at www.AOPAvotes.org and send a letter to your Senators and Representative asking them to sponsor the Medicare O&P Improvement Act of 2015 (S.829 and HR 1530). Since the 2nd Quarter staff report, 446 individual AOPA members have sent 653 letters to 205 individual members of Congress asking for their support of the Medicare O&P Improvements Act of 2015.

The Medicare Audit Improvement Act of 2015 (HR 1526)

On March 23, 2015 Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC) introduced the Medicare Audit Improvement Act of 2015 (HR 1526) and has been referred to the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health for review. This piece of legislation would require CMS to recognize the validity of the orthotist's and/or prosthetist's notes in determining the medical necessity of an item being provided to a Medicare beneficiary; and would officially and legislatively separate orthotics and prosthetics from durable medical equipment. The bill would also offer new relief by limiting CMS recoupment on a denied claim to no more than 50% of the claim until the ALJ determination is completed.

If you have not already done so, please be sure to visit AOPAVotes at www.AOPAvotes.org and send a letter to your Representative(s) asking them to co-sponsor the Medicare Audit Improvement Act of 2015 (HR 1526). This bill can be the solution to the age-old problem of treating DME and O&P as one-size fits all that has vexed O&P providers for years. Please add your name to the list. Just a few minutes are all you'll need to invest to help save your future.

Coding and Reimbursement Update

RAC Audit Update

In December, 2014 CMS announced the award of the national DMEPOS, Home Health, and Hospice Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) contract to Connolly Healthcare, LLC. The start date for work on this contract was delayed after a protest was filed by Performant Recovery. While the Government Accountability Office (GAO) website indicates that the Performant Recovery protest has been dismissed, in August 2015, CMS indicated that it would be re-issuing a request for proposal for all of the RAC contracts. It is not clear if this invalidates the RAC contract award to Connolly Healthcare, LLC but there has been no indication that Connolly has been authorized to initiate new RAC audits under the national DMEPOS, Home Health, and Hospice RAC contract. CMS has authorized the existing four RAC contractors to continue audit activities on a limited basis until the new request for proposal is released.

AOPA will continue to follow developments on the status of RAC audits and provide updates to its members.

AOPA's Take. Where You Go.....When You need to Know!

AOPA's blog site, www.aopastake.org continues to grow in popularity, with almost 200 subscribers to date. *AOPA's Take* has proven to be a very useful tool in communicating important information relevant to the O&P community in a timely and efficient manner. Feedback from subscribers has been extremely positive. *AOPA's Take* is quickly becoming a "go to" resource for O&P practices. The goal for the next quarter will be to increase the current number of subscriptions to more than 300 subscribers.

Medicare Proposed Rule on Prior Authorization for Certain Prosthetic Items

CMS has not issued a final rule regarding the implementation of prior authorization for certain prosthetic services. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has received the text of the final rule and is reviewing it prior to publication. AOPA secured a meeting with OMB representatives where it shared its concern regarding the potential inclusion of prosthetic services in the final rule. The OMB representatives were very engaged during the meeting and indicated that they understood AOPA's concerns and would consider them prior to publication of the Final Rule. AOPA submitted extensive comments on this proposed rule when it was released in 2014 and continues to monitor the Federal Register for the publication of a final rule relative to this issue. AOPA will communicate any future developments regarding prior authorization to its members immediately.

Medicare Proposed Rule on 2016 Inpatient Acute Hospital Payment Rates and Expansion of Post Acute Care Bundling Initiatives

On April 30, 2015, CMS published a Proposed Rule regarding the 2016 Acute Hospital Inpatient PPS rates. The proposed rule also discussed the potential expansion of post acute care bundling initiatives.

AOPA provided comments specific to the potential harm to both patients and providers if orthotic and prosthetic services were included in any post acute care bundled payment scenario. AOPA's comments focused on the significant differences between O&P and DME items, the relative high cost, low utilization of O&P devices in the inpatient setting, and the need for an extended clinical relationship between patients and their prosthetists as reasons why O&P should not be considered for inclusion in a post acute care bundling scenario. AOPA pointed out that two bills currently pending in the House of Representatives (H.R. 1458 and H.R. 2502) both contain provisions that specifically exclude O&P from post acute care bundling.

Off The Shelf Orthoses

AOPA continues to have discussions with CMS regarding the authority of CMS contractors to implement policy regarding the definition of custom fitted orthoses and who is qualified to fit them without following the notice and rulemaking process required by the Administrative Procedures Act.

As previously reported, On October 31, 2014, CMS released the final ESRD rule but decided not to implement any of the proposed changes relating to OTS orthotics including the definition of the term "minimal self adjustment" as it relates to the provision of OTS orthoses. In addition, CMS decided not to implement the provisions of the proposed rule that would prevent certified orthotic fitters and assistants, operating within their defined scope of practice, from providing custom fitted orthoses. Prior to the release of the final rule in which CMS elected not to finalize its proposed changes to define who can and cannot fit custom fitted orthoses, the DME MACs updated their Local Coverage Determinations and Policy articles for orthoses to reflect many of the changes that were included in the proposed rule.

AOPA believes that the actions of the DME MACs to implement policy changes based on a proposed rule that specifically elected to not include OTS provisions in its final version is a clear violation of the rules laid out in the Administrative Procedures Act and will continue to press CMS on this issue.

OTS Orthoses and Competitive Bidding

On April 21, 2015, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the product categories and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) that will be included in the next round of DMEPOS Competitive Bidding, now being called Round 1 2017. While it appeared that off the shelf (OTS) orthoses were being considered for inclusion in competitive bidding, OTS orthoses were not among the eight product categories

identified for inclusion in the Round 1 2017 competitive bidding program. While this is certainly a positive development, it does not mean that OTS orthoses will not be included in competitive bidding at some point. The descriptor changes that were implemented in 2014 to clearly distinguish OTS orthoses from custom fitted orthoses certainly indicate the intent of CMS to eventually include OTS orthoses in competitive bidding at some point in the future.

AOPA will continue its ongoing discussion with CMS regarding its concern about the continued expansion of what are considered OTS orthoses through regulatory and policy based channels rather than following the appropriate notice and rulemaking process required by the Administrative Procedures Act.

DME MAC Proof of Delivery Requirements

On February 12, 2015, the DME MACs released a joint article that discussed the proper format for proof of delivery documentation to support Medicare claims. The joint publication indicated that medical reviewers have consistently seen a list of HCPCS codes and their descriptors used on proof of delivery documentation, especially for orthotic and prosthetic claims. According to the DME MACs, this practice is not acceptable for proof of delivery purposes as it does not allow the medical reviewer to make a determination of what was billed and if it was coded correctly. The joint DME MAC publication provides the following recommendation for maintaining proper proof of delivery documentation:

“The preferred method is use of a brand name and model number, brand name and serial number or manufacturer name and part number to identify the product. If this type of information is not available for the product, suppliers may use a detailed narrative description of the item; however, it must contain sufficient descriptive information to allow a proper coding determination. This “narrative description” of the item is not the HCPCS code narrative.”

AOPA believes that this represents yet another hurdle to reimbursement for providers who are providing medically necessary O&P care to Medicare beneficiaries. The documentation of HCPCS codes and their complete descriptors has been acceptable for proof of delivery purposes for many years. The sudden change in policy appears to be inconsistent with what is in the Program Integrity Manual and other CMS policy documents. AOPA continues to communicate its concern regarding this policy change with CMS officials and wrote jointly to Laurence Wilson and Shantanu Agrawal on August 25, 2015 requesting that the policy “be reversed/withdrawn and denials based on it be reversed.” These comments were also included with AOPA’s LCD comments.

ICD-10 Transition-Free Service for AOPA Members

AOPA has established an online members only free resource on its website that will allow AOPA members to easily translate ICD-9 codes to ICD-10 codes. This resource, known as the AOPA ICD-10 Bridge has proven popular among AOPA members and is a useful reference tool. It is important to note, however, that O&P providers must report ICD-10 diagnosis codes on claims that are consistent with what the physician has recorded in their records. Inconsistencies between the diagnosis information recorded by the physician in the patient’s medical record and the ICD-10 code that is reported on the O&P claim, may lead to audit denials in the future.

AOPA Participation on DME MAC Advisory Councils

AOPA continues to actively participate on each of the four DME MAC Advisory Councils. These groups meet on a regular basis with representatives of the four DME MACs to discuss provider issues. AOPA has been able to create and maintain open lines of communication with Medicare contractors as a result of participation on the advisory councils.

Mastering Medicare Webinars

In August of 2014 the ever popular monthly Audio Conferences were converted into webinars to help you get the most out of your learning experience. All Webinars begin at 1:00 PM Eastern on the second Wednesday of each

month. The Webinars are \$99 each for members and \$199 for non-members. Members can sign up for the entire 2015 series for only \$990 and get two free. Sign up at www.AOPAnet.org. Mid-year signups for the entire series receive a recorded version of sessions missed.

The webinars are a great way to boost employee morale (by providing monthly staff education event), provide needed education and CE Credits.*

The Remaining 2015 Schedule:

November 11 How to Make a Good Impression: Marketing Yourself to Your Referrals

December 9 Bringing in the New Year: New Codes and Changes for 2016

AOPA Essential Coding & Billing Seminar

AOPA experts provide the most up-to-date information to help O&P Practitioners and office billing staff learn how to code complex devices, including repairs and adjustments, through interactive discussions with AOPA experts, your colleagues, and much more. Meant for both practitioners and office staff, this advanced two-day event will feature breakout sessions for these two groups, to ensure concentration on material appropriate to each group. The registration rate is \$525 per attendee for members and \$725 for non-members. For additional attendees from the same office, a discount is offered: \$475 for members and \$675 for non-members. The first three seminars in 2015 were held in Savannah, GA, Seattle, WA, and Philadelphia, PA and were well attended. The final seminar of 2015 will be held at The Flamingo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, NV on November 9-10, 2015.

Learn more at <http://www.aopanet.org/education/coding-billing-seminar/>

National Assembly Rings the Bells Big Time

The 98th Annual AOPA National Assembly October 7-10 held in conjunction with the Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Orthotics and Prosthetics drew 2,200 O&P professionals to San Antonio, Texas.

Whether it was the magnet power of San Antonio, the programming, the convenient facilities or all of the above, the initial feedback has been extremely positive. The opening ceremony honor guard was followed by an emotional keynote from Ret. Lt. Col. Donald Gajewski, former director of the Center for the Intrepid who told the moving story of the Center's mission of restoring mobility and life quality to returning wounded soldiers. The opener plus the fun events in the exhibit hall and the clinical and business management educational content drew "best ever comments."

Lt. Gajewski echoed the thoughts of the audience when during his presentation he expressed shock that the government would seek to impose limitations on providing the highest technology appropriate for amputees citing the recent LCD for lower extremity prosthetics.

If you missed the opening session by Ret. Lt. Col. Donald Gajewski, don't worry because the *O&P Almanac* covered the address and has provided highlights for you! <https://youtu.be/wmfGOY-vO44>

Welcome Reception Texas Pride Contest

Attendees were welcomed to the show *Texas Style* by exhibitors who competed to show attendees the most Texas Pride. Exhibitors used costume, refreshments and décor to entice attendees to vote. The winners of the Texas Pride contest in each category are outlined below:

Size Category:	Small 1-3 Booths	Medium 4-6 Booths	Large 7+ Booths
1 st Place	Bulldog Tools	Cascade Orthopedic Supply Inc.	OPTEC USA
2 nd Place	WillowWood	Becker Orthopedic	Ottobock

Lifetime Achievement Award

Each year the American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA) presents the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. This honor is bestowed on individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of orthotics and prosthetics. The AOPA Board of Directors presented the 2015 award to Thomas V. DiBello, CO, FAAOP, former AOPA President and Board member.

Legislative Advocacy Awards

The Ralph R. “Ronney” Snell, CPO, FAAOP, Legislative Advocacy Award recognizes individuals who have made valuable contributions toward advancing the legislative and regulatory goals of the O&P field by motivating members of Congress and other decision makers to take action on behalf of O&P. This year’s recipients are: Charles W. Kuffel, MSM, CPO, FAAOP, Teri Kuffel, Esq., and Rick Riley, CEO, Townsend Design.

Thranhardt Lecture Series

The Thranhardt Lecture Series is always considered the “Best of Show” in clinical research. Launched by a gift from J.E. Hanger Southeast in memory of Howard R. Thranhardt, CP, the series recognizes individuals committed to advancing O&P education and research. Winners of the Thranhardt Lecture receive an award of \$500 each. This year’s recipients are:

Can Individuals with Transtibial Amputation Reduce the Metabolic Demand of Walking Using Realtime Visual Feedback?, Elizabeth Russell Esposito, PhD; and

Balance-Confidence May Help Explain Physical Function and Community-Integration among Individuals with Unilateral Transfemoral and Transtibial Amputations, J. Megan Sions, PhD, DPT, PT, OCS.

Sam E. Hamontree, CP Business Education Award

Congratulations to the winner of the 2015 Hamontree Lecture Series! The votes are in. Attendees of the 98th Annual AOPA National Assembly chose the winner of the Sam E. Hamontree, CP Lecture series and we’re pleased to announce the winner:

Thomas McGovern for the presentation
Control Your Marketing Message by Controlling the Medium

Student Poster Awards

Tyler Klenow was the recipient of the fifth annual Otto and Lucille Becker Award for his orthotic poster presentation “A Functional Comparison of a Carbon Fiber AFO and Two Modular KAFO Conditions Using Outcome Measures in a Veteran Subject with Traumatic Brain Injury.” Tyler is a resident at James A. Haley Veteran’s Hospital, and graduated with a Master of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics from Eastern Michigan University. An award was also presented to Eastern Michigan University. The Otto and Lucille Becker award has been made available by an endowment from Becker Orthopedic.

Lisa Abernathy, at Alabama State University, was the recipient of the fifth annual Edwin and Kathryn Arbogast Award for her prosthetic poster presentation “Going Back In Time: A Content Analysis On The Media Portrayal Of Characters with Antiquated Prostheses.” An award was also presented to Alabama State University. The Edwin and Kathryn Arbogast award has been made available by an endowment by the Willow Wood Company.

The award recipients are entitled to a \$500 cash award, complimentary Assembly registration, up to 3 nights of hotel accommodations, coach class airfare to the Assembly, and of course recognition during the awards ceremony.

Technical Fabrication Contest

The exciting, but extremely competitive 2015 Technical Fabrication Contest held during the Assembly was a timed event, where participants competed to properly assemble an articulating AFO the fastest. Participants were allowed to have their time recorded up to three times. First place winners received a \$500 prize and second place winners received a \$200 prize. Congratulations to the following:

Professional Category

First Place Winner, Tommy Coronado, CPOA with a time of 46.98 seconds

Second Place Winner, Brian DeMain, CPO with a time of 52.41 seconds

Technician Category

First Place Winner, Dan Lopez, ROPT with a time of 58.03 seconds

Second Place Winner, Paul Mindenann with a time of 1:09:04

Student Category

First Place Winner Mary Walsh with a time of 1:01

Second Place Winner, Kenneth O'Mera with a time of 1:19

Telling Our Story – Communications!

Mobility Saves Updates

The Mobility Saves public relations campaign has moved forward spreading the word that Mobility Saves lives and money. The www.MobilitySaves.com website continues to serve as a resource for O&P practitioners, medical providers, payers, regulators, and patients to learn about the cost-effectiveness of O&P and see examples of lives improved by O&P. The website is continuously updated with new research as it becomes available, as well as other relevant news.

Mobility Saves is growing on social media, with over 9,000 likes on Facebook at (like us at www.facebook.com/mobilitysaves), 1371 Twitter Followers (www.twitter.com/MobilitySaves), and 131 connections on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/company/mobility-saves).

The contest for orthotic and prosthetic users to submit video testimonials will be ending October 31, 2015. O&P users have begun submitting testimonials for a grand prize of \$500, a 2nd prize of \$250, and all entrants receive a t-shirt. Please see details of the contest at bit.ly/MobilitySavesContest.

O&P Almanac

The *O&P Almanac* continues to be the go-to O&P magazine, featuring hot topics that appeal to O&P professionals on both the clinical and business side. August focused on how O&P Companies are using Big Data, and September's feature was on High Activity O&P Patients. October highlighted AOPA and the profession's response to the LCD Draft Policy Proposal and the issue was featured prominently at the AOPA National Assembly.

Membership

Welcome New Members

Although building membership is a year-round activity, AOPA conducted its targeted annual member recruitment drive this quarter. AOPA welcomes the following new patient care facility members: M-Power Prosthetics and Orthotics, Dallas, TX; Freedom Orthotics & Prosthetics, Houston, TX; South County Artificial Limb Company, Wakefield RI; Orthotics & Prosthetics Associates, Inc, Milwaukee, WI; Collier Orthotics & Prosthetics, Pleasant Hill, CA; G and G Prosthetic Services, Ltd, Temple, TX; Blue Sky Orthotics & Prosthetics in Bryan, TX; Cobb

Prosthetics, Farmington, MO; Prescott's Orthotics & Prosthetics, San Antonio, TX; Pedorthic Services LLC, dba The Healthy Foot Center, Lexington, KY.

The following companies were welcomed back to AOPA: Premier Hope of Monroe, LA; Mid-Atlantic Prosthetics & Orthotics, Alexandria, VA; Bonel Orthopedic Bracing, Philadelphia, PA; Diablo Prosthetics, Pleasanton, CA; Central Texas Orthotics & Prosthetics, Bryan TX, and New Life Brace and Limb, Webster, TX.

New supplier members joining AOPA this quarter are: Anodyne, Milwaukee, WI; Turbomed Orthotics, Quebec City, CA; RS Print, Plymouth, MI; UNYQ, San Francisco, CA; and Pillet Hand Prostheses, New York, NY.

Three new international companies joined AOPA this quarter: E-Life International Co. Ltd, New Taipei City, Taiwan; Orthoprotésicos Especializados Ltda, Chia, Columbia; and Xi'an Boao Prosthetic & Orthotic, Xi'an, China.

Two new research/educational companies joined AOPA: Design Interactive, Orlando, FL; and GrafTech International Holdings Inc, Brooklyn, OH.

2015 Operating Performance and Compensation Surveys Available

More than ninety-three companies, representing 1,148 full-time facilities and 75 part-time facilities, participated in AOPA's 2015 Operating Performance and Compensation Survey. Members are encouraged to participate in these benchmarking surveys (FREE) to assist in developing specific strategies to gauge and improve the health of their O&P business. The survey also helps AOPA develop a more accurate picture of the financial trends in the O&P industry.

Published copies of the two separate final 2015 reports are now available at <https://www.aopanetonline.org/store>. Member: Electronic Version \$185, Hard copy \$285; Nonmember: Electronic Version \$325; Hard copy \$425.

Mark your calendars for May 2016: When you participate in the Operating Performance survey, you receive the final published report (and a customized report for your facility) for FREE. Watch for announcements in the AOPA's online bi-weekly newsletter *SmartBrief*.

AOPA's Bookstore

Everybody likes saving money. Did you know that you have discount coupons for products in AOPA's bookstore? AOPA's 2015 calendar mailed to members in January has discount coupons for each month on the inside back cover. Here are featured products in the coming months: November *25% off the Electronic version of the Compensation & Benefits Survey Report*; December: *10% off any bookstore item of your Choice*. Use the promo code "calendar" to receive the online discounts.

And Finally

You made possible the resources enabling AOPA to invest substantial funds in implementing the plan to seek rescission of the LCD Policy Article. We think it will give you one more reason to feel AOPA is a good investment and one more reason for AOPA to thank you again for your loyal support.

Sincerely,



Thomas F. Fise
Executive Director