



**American Orthotic &
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AOPA in Advance

Breaking News for O&P Professionals

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SPECIAL EDITION

O&P News

AOPA President Issues Response to *New York Times* Article

AOPA President Tom DiBello, CO, FAAOP, issued a response to the *New York Times* regarding an article it published January 17. The article by Gina Kolata, "Close Look at Orthotics Raises a Welter of Doubts," consisted of interviews and speculation about foot orthoses, questioning their effectiveness and an absence of underlying science.

Mr. DiBello's reply to this article expressed concerns over Ms. Kolata's over-generalizations and imprecise terminology. He explained that in current medical terminology, the term orthotics is commonly understood to describe the broad range of bracing devices across a spectrum that ranges from a mass manufactured knee brace, or shoe inserts up to totally custom fabricated spinal bracing for scoliosis and custom bracing items that sustain mobility for patients with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and other major chronic, debilitating health conditions. Consequently, the article failed to capture the fact that the discipline of orthotics extends far beyond the relatively narrow subset of foot orthoses.

Additionally, Mr. DiBello explained that the field is not devoid of rigorous scientific outcomes studies; valuable research has been completed and comparative effectiveness studies which offer great promise are underway. The criticism that studies do not include controls, i.e. "groups...that did not receive orthotics" is simplistic, since there are no placebos in bracing-the patient always knows whether they are or are not wearing a brace. Patient needs for improved mobility, interventions to forestall or alleviate deterioration of underlying anatomical impairments, and for improved comfort continue to be addressed across the broad field of customized orthotics (as well as in the much more limited field of shoe orthotics), even as comparative studies are ongoing.

The guidelines set by the *New York Times* for responding to stories stipulated that letters to the editor could not exceed 150 words. Accordingly, Mr. DiBello abided by this constraint in order to enhance the likelihood of the letter being published.

Mr. DiBello requested that AOPA membership be sent the letter to the editor.

[Click here to read the *New York Times* Article.](#)

[Click here to read Tom DiBello's letter to the editor regarding the article's imprecision.](#)

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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