



A TOPIC AOPA IS WORKING ON THAT IS IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF YOUR BUSINESS

Investing In Outcomes /Evidence-Based Research Is Not Only the Right Thing To Do—It Will Be Salvation for O&P Payments on New Technologies!

The Core of the Issue

Saying it's so won't cut it any more. Payers are demanding evidence-based research that verifies real outcomes produced by specific devices and treatment programs that O&P provides. My October letter to you focused on the first ever, ground breaking, cost effectiveness research study funded earlier this year by AOPA through the Amputee Coalition and why it's important to you. This initial cost effectiveness study will likely lead us into other questions of cost effectiveness and quality of care that must be answered. For example, data shows that a significant percentage of amputees are not being referred by physicians for prosthetic care. It's a question we will definitely want to pursue with more cost effectiveness research.

Outcomes research is a different inquiry...not solely about what it costs, but what treatments provide the best results? Does the new, more expensive technology yield any better, measurable result from the standpoint of patient health and mobility when compared with more traditional, less expensive treatments?

We all hope these studies provide conclusive evidence substantiating patient outcomes. Funding and conducting evidence-based research must be a top priority so O&P can preserve an ability to continue as a distinct segment of health care providers under the new Affordable Care Act.

If you can show improved patient outcomes you have a decent argument to be paid for a new technology (the possibility, but not the promise of payment).

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Why Is It Important To You?

If you can't point to evidence of improved patient outcomes, you won't get paid. Your products and services are on the line – firing line that is! Every conceivable aspect of healthcare, every type of device, every kind of treatment program – will be subject to scrutiny by payers as never before. Let's face it, the health care industry has been turned on its head and there is no helping hand out there, save our own, to put things right. It's up to each of us through AOPA and the other organizations in O&P to deliver clear and concise evidence that proves not only do we leave the patients better than they were – but in the long term we can leave the payers better than they were. Outcomes evidence-based research and ultimately, evidence-based practice are the keys to delivering patient and payer benefits and they must go hand in hand.

What Is AOPA Doing About This?

AOPA has allocated your resources to initially do five things: (1) directly funded the first O&P cost effectiveness study mentioned earlier which has been commissioned by the Amputee Coalition; (2) retained Linchpin, LLC which has an enviable track record of securing federal funding for specific research that can document patient outcomes; (3) through the Center for O&P Learning and Outcomes Evidence-Based Practice, AOPA has funded seven pilot research projects that provide the framework for securing funds for expanded outcomes research;

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(4) also retained The Winkenwerder Company to help amalgamate the resources of the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and Johns Hopkins University toward the ambitious objective of launching the first longitudinal study of patient outcomes over an extended period of time with the initial focus on outcomes experienced by active duty military and veterans; and (5) in cooperation with several AOPA suppliers jointly funded two comparative effectiveness research studies on the patient outcomes of non dynamic response versus dynamic response prosthetic feet and microprocessor versus non-microprocessor prosthetic knees.

Each effort represents an important part of the puzzle that will lead us to building credible research outcomes data banks that will conclusively demonstrate the various outcomes of specific treatment programs and devices. Most importantly, the evidence of what impact these outcomes have on the patients we serve and the long term cost effectiveness of the outcomes will be clearly documented.

The process of building the research literature with more outcomes and comparative effectiveness studies that can both demonstrate the value of new technologies and move us in the direction of evidence-based practice is a long, expensive, demanding process. The five steps noted above have gone a long way in moving us onto the field as a credible player in offering a solid demonstration of the value of what we do in terms of what the payers are demanding.

Very truly yours,



Thomas F. Fise, JD
AOPA Executive Director

Did You Miss Anything? Here are the back titles of recent Executive Director Letters. If you missed one you'd like to know more about—request Executive Director letter and month at info@AOPANET.ORG



JUNE 2011
Making Sure that Orthotics and Prosthetics Are Included in the Essential Health Benefits Package Under Health Care Reform



OCTOBER 2011
Joint Amputee Coalition/AOPA Cost Effectiveness Study Could Buttress O&P's Value Claims in an Adverse Health Care Environment



JULY 2011
Aggressively Intervening in States to Counter Moves to Eliminate Coverage for Orthotics and/or Prosthetics to Medicaid Beneficiaries



NOVEMBER 2011
Making Sure the IRS and the Department of Treasury Exempts O&P Patient Care Facilities and Manufacturers from the 2.3 percent Medical Device Excise Tax



AUGUST 2011
Making Sure That Orthotics and Prosthetics Are Known to Policy Makers, the Public and our Patients

*The September Executive Director Letter was not published in lieu of National Assembly.