

Appropriated Research Funding for O&P Outcomes

Outcomes Research in Prosthetics and Orthotics What Next?

On January 17, President Obama signed into law an omnibus appropriations bill that included \$10 million for the Department of Defense to conduct outcomes research on orthotics and prosthetics. That is great news – and there's still a lot of work ahead. What comes next?

The appropriations bill gives very little direction to the Department of Defense about how the funding should be spent, other than that it is specific to prosthetics and orthotics, and intended for research on clinical outcomes. By providing funding through the Department of Defense, rather than the National Institutes of Health or the Veterans' Administration, the research will focus on challenges faced by service members with limb loss or limb impairment. However, the DoD also recognizes that the research should have broad reach and applicability to Veterans and civilians as well.

There are multiple chains of command within the Department of Defense whose areas of responsibility include medical research and care for Wounded Warriors with limb impairment and limb loss. After the DoD determines which will oversee this funding, the selected administrator will follow its established process for deciding what research topics should be the focus of the grants. AOPA will provide recommendations, as will DoD Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Senator Dick Durbin, who secured these funds. It is critically important to AOPA and to the Chairman that these precious research dollars help to answer the most important questions faced by clinicians in caring for persons with limb loss and limb impairment, and that the findings generated have a positive impact on patient care.

Once the general outlines of outcomes research topics are established, a competitive grant announcement will be made. Interested and qualified applicants will be invited to submit research proposals, which will be reviewed by a panel selected by the DoD, and award announcements made. AOPA will work with Chairman Durbin to ensure that the funding announcement is issued, and grants are awarded, in a timely manner before the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30.