



November 23, 2020

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: Docket No. CDC 2020-0117

On behalf of the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA), which represents more than 2,000 member organizations that provide essential healthcare to those individuals living with limb loss and limb difference, I request the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) ensure that employees of orthotic and prosthetic (O&P) facilities have access to COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they become available.

O&P providers were identified as essential healthcare workers at the onset of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) and have continued to deliver medically necessary care throughout the PHE despite the increased risk of exposure to and contraction of the COVID-19 virus. While AOPA has supported its members in taking every precaution possible to reduce the risk of exposure to their employees and patients, vaccination remains the most effective method to prevent COVID-19 infection.

AOPA believes that due to the close patient interaction that O&P providers require to treat patients, they should be included with the other essential healthcare workers that get access to COVID-19 vaccination as soon as it is available. Access to vaccination is not only crucial to reduce infection of essential healthcare workers like O&P providers but to also reduce potential exposure to the vulnerable patient populations that AOPA members treat every day. O&P care is often affiliated with secondary conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease that exponentially increase a COVID-19 infected patient's chances of developing severe disease. Including O&P providers in the initial distribution of COVID-19 vaccines will benefit both providers and their patients.

AOPA appreciates ACIP's efforts and support of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention as it oversees a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination effort. We hope you will take under consideration the concerns we raised above that will ensure the safe and effective provision of O&P care in the U.S. continues. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Eve Lee, Executive Director, AOPA, at elee@aopanet.org.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Lutz, CPO
AOPA President