

# The American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (The Academy)



## About the Academy

The Academy, founded in 1970, is the professional organization representing orthotists and prosthetists certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC) as well as assistants, technicians, fitters and others affiliated with the profession of orthotics and prosthetics (O&P). It is dedicated to helping members provide the highest level of professionalism and service to their patients.

Collaborating with other educational, research and related organizations, the Academy supports technical and ethical standards for the profession. It provides programs and seminars for continuing education and supports research, outreach and advocacy work to advance the scientific and educational attainments of O&P professionals.

The Academy promotes professional development and growth within the field through:

- **Seminars and Conferences** including an Annual Meeting & Scientific Symposium, as well as State-of-the-Science Conferences to establish best practices and identify research priorities. The Academy also has a Fellows program for advanced study.
- **An Online Learning Center (The Paul E. Leimkuehler OLC)** providing O&P practitioners and other health professionals access to exceptional education programming 24 hours a day from their home or office.
- **The Journal of Prosthetics & Orthotics (JPO)**, the Academy's peer-reviewed scientific journal.
- **Professional Development Programs** offering specialty certification in areas such as stroke, pediatrics and prosthetic foot ankle mechanisms among other areas.
- **The Orthotic and Prosthetic Alliance** Through collaboration with three organizations representing differing areas in the O&P field, the Academy educates the government and other entities on what is required to assure quality O&P care for the public.

- **A National Awareness and Outreach Campaign** - This campaign promotes the profession to the public including but not limited to high school and college students, teachers, counselors, allied health professionals, and others seeking a fulfilling career. This also includes returning military veterans. Detailed information on O&P career and schooling opportunities and the ability to connect with O&P professionals in any part of the country can be found by visiting the Academy's career website at [www.opcareers.org](http://www.opcareers.org).

## History of the Profession

The study of orthotics began with the making of splints and braces. The area of prosthetics continues to grow as it has done in leaps and bounds after each war.

- Before the Civil War, few artificial limb companies existed. However, after the Civil War and subsequent wars, casualties dramatically increased the need for artificial limbs as well as orthopedic braces due to neuromuscular and musculoskeletal impairments.
- Limb companies were started, generally by amputees who were dissatisfied with available prostheses.
- In 1948 a certification board now known as ABC was formed to set minimum standards for practitioner education and experience levels and to test their clinical knowledge.

Orthotic and prosthetic technologies and treatments are advancing at a rapid rate. The need for the unique knowledge base of O&P professionals continues to escalate. O&P will continually evolve to address the growing aging population and the epidemics of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease — the leading causes of limb loss.

