

O&P Trends & Statistics



Future Demand for Orthotic and Prosthetic Services

In the coming years, there will be a growing need for certified orthotists and prosthetists across the country. Certified professionals who enter the field will find numerous job opportunities. Those who are in the O&P profession today realize that they have found both a lifelong passion and meaningful profession.

- The total number of persons with paralysis, deformity, or orthopedic impairments that use orthoses is expected to reach 7.3 million by the year 2020.
- The total number of persons with an amputation, and those using a prosthesis, is expected to reach 2.4 million by the year 2020.
- In 2010, 5,644 practitioners were certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics. Nearly 1,500 of these practitioners are 55 or older and likely to consider retirement within the next ten years.
- The goal of the Academy's national recruitment and awareness campaign is to increase the number of qualified graduates entering the profession to provide care for those who will require O&P services in the future.

Trends in Prosthetic Services

The incidence of diabetes and diabetes-related amputations continues to increase.

- 20.8 million children and adults — 7 percent of the population — have diabetes. The number of Americans with diabetes is projected to reach 29 million by 2050.
- It is estimated that approximately 1.9 million people in the US have had an amputation. More than 60 percent of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations are a result of diabetes.
- The rate of amputation for people with diabetes is 10 times higher than for people without diabetes.

Trends in Orthotic Services

- Obesity is a primary driver of orthotic service needs. There is a significant link between obesity and diabetes which creates the need for both orthotic and prosthetic services.
- The National Center for Health Statistics notes that the percent of non-hospitalized adults age 20 years and over who are overweight or obese is an astounding 66.3 percent.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that arthritis is on the rise in America and projects that 67 million people will be afflicted by 2030. Orthoses are frequently used to stabilize joints, reduce pain, and improve function in those suffering from arthritis.
- Due to medical advances, more people are surviving strokes, but are left with long-term physical disabilities, frequently necessitating orthotic management to improve function.
- As the Baby Boomer population ages, it is at great risk of back injuries and paralysis. These individuals will have an increasing need for orthotic services.

Trends in Cost-Effective Health Care

- The ability to provide the most cost-effective and clinically appropriate O&P care will be dependent on having a large enough population of well-educated, certified O&P professionals.
- Involving certified and licensed orthotists and prosthetists in reimbursement policy decisions regarding new technological advancements will be cost-effective and enable individuals to have appropriate life-changing and life-enhancing O&P devices.

For more information on the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists and details on careers in O&P, visit www.oandp.org.

The information outlined above is from a National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) study by Caroline Nielsen, PhD, on "Issues Affecting the Future Demand for Orthotists and Prosthetists" (2002) specific to practitioners certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC), a 2006 Workforce Demand Study prepared for NCOPE and the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) by Corathers Health Consulting, LLC, and from the American Diabetes Association (2005).