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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear COPA Members & Colleagues,

The association is off to a roaring start in 2024. After personal tours of 15 different legislators through O&P facilities, we will host a rally on the steps of the Sacramento Capitol on March 20th. Our rallying cry will be "Mobility Saves" as we look to maximize awareness to our current access to care issue. Following the rally, we will make personal visits to legislators in their Sacramento offices. COPA's full court press is on to increase Medi-Cal reimbursement for O&P devices.

COPA's board of directors is also hard at work to plan the 2024 Symposium which will be held at Loma Linda University. We look forward to offering a well-rounded agenda of topics to equip attendees with the latest research, techniques, and technologies to improve patient outcomes. Additionally, we plan to partner with a broad spectrum of manufacturers to showcase

their latest products to hit the market. It is sure to be a great event and we look forward to seeing you there.

Another opportunity to see and be seen is the COPA Happy Hour series. Stay tuned for announcements of a local event coming to a brewery near you.

COPA's efforts are grass roots and require involvement from many volunteers. We urge you to join us in advocacy, education, and networking events. It takes a village, and we look forward to partnering with you to improve the O&P field in California.

In service,

Spencer Greene

Spencer Greene, MS, CPO
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209-573-1806

JOIN COPA FOR A RALLY AT THE STATE CAPITOL

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024

from 10:30-11:30 AM (Please arrive by 10:00 AM)

**at the California State Capitol, West Steps
1315 10th Street, Sacramento**

MOBILITY SAVES \$!

COPA is calling all amputees and O&P providers to rally in support of improving access to high quality care in California. Our strong coalition includes AOPA, Amputee Coalition, Loma Linda University, CSU Dominguez Hills and hundreds of O&P providers and patients experiencing limb loss and limb difference. Our theme for the rally is "MOBILITY SAVES."

REGISTER TODAY at californiaoandp.com



We hope to have 100 attendees at the rally which will be covered by the media. Speakers will include amputees, O&P providers and state legislators who will urge the Legislature and Governor Newsom to increase reimbursement for O&P devices in the Medi-Cal Program. Increased reimbursement will create a sustainable model for O&P providers to serve Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

The Legislature and the media need to understand that "Mobility Saves!"

According to the Journal of NeuroEngineering and Rehabilitation, patients who received timely orthotic or prosthetic care had comparable or lower total health care costs than a comparison group of untreated patients.

Specifically, patients who received lower extremity orthotics had 18-month episode costs that were \$1,939 lower than comparable patients who did not receive orthotic treatment (\$22,734 vs. \$24,673). Patients who received spinal orthotic treatment had 18-month episode costs that were \$2,094 lower than comparable non-treated patients (\$23,560 vs. \$25,655). Patients who received lower extremity prostheses had comparable 15-month episode payments to matched beneficiaries not receiving prostheses (\$68,877 vs. \$68,893) despite the relatively high cost of the prosthesis.

The "prosthetic and orthotic appliances" category has not received an increase in Medi-Cal reimbursement in over 25 years; while the cost of materials, labor and overhead needed to produce these medically necessary services and devices have skyrocketed.

With reimbursement rates for many of these services pegged at less than the cost of their production factors, Medi-Cal is no longer accepted by an increasing number of practitioners throughout California since doing so would cause practitioners and clinics to be operating at a loss.

Medi-Cal reimbursement for O&P service currently averages only 51 percent of the prevailing Medicare allowable while the national Medicaid average is 75 percent of the prevailing Medicare allowable.

This equation translates into thousands fewer "prosthetic and orthotic appliances" reaching patients in need. The resulting human costs of this ongoing trend is devastating and results in untimely death, loss of independence and lower rates of integration in the community for an already vulnerable disabled population.

"If you miss a day 'Under the Dome,' you miss a lot!"

COPA's Happy Hour Event


COPA's Happy Hour is an informal event held in both northern and southern California throughout the year. This event is open to everyone in the O&P industry to meet and greet peers, colleagues, and friends, and discuss anything and everything O&P.


Come out and join us. Have a beer, see some friends, tell some stories, and let COPA know how we can do better! Snacks and the first round of beer are always complimentary.

RSVP: californiaoandp.com

COPA Happy Hour

Golden Road Brewing
16390 Pacific Coast Hwy
Huntington Beach

 Wednesday
March 27, 2024

 5:30 - 7:30 PM

COPA invites you to our Happy Hour event!

SPONSORED BY:



LLU STUDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

By Kimberly Jones MSOP, CPO



On Thursday February 15, 2024, Loma Linda University's Department of Orthotics & Prosthetics held a 1-day Capstone Conference in which their 2nd year students presented their current research projects. Clinicians attending this presentation earned category 1 CEUs.

The research topics presented were:

Title: Comparing Functionality And Patient Satisfaction Of Off-The-Shelf Carbon Fiber AFOs In Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease Population.

Purpose: To examine the functionality and patient satisfaction of off-the-shelf carbon fiber AFOs among the CMT populations. The following carbon fiber AFOs will be compared: Allard Toe Off 2.0, Össur AFO Lite and the Helios EI.

Title: Comparative Analysis of Functional Outcomes and User Experience: Externally Powered Exoskeleton vs. Single Hooped Cable Reciprocal Gait in T11-L2 Spinal Cord Injury Patients.

Purpose: The purpose is to compare the functional outcomes and user experiences of T11-L2 spinal cord injury patients using an externally powered exoskeleton and a single-hooped-cable reciprocating gait orthosis. It is hypothesized that the exoskeleton will result in superior outcome measures in terms of speed, stability, energy efficiency, and user satisfaction.

Title: Comparison Of 3D Printed vs Standard Carbon Fiber Fabrication On Cost, Fabrication Time, Weight, Comfort And Mobility Of A Definitive Prosthetic Socket In Transtibial Amputees.

Purpose: The purpose of this graduate research is to directly compare 3D-printed definitive sockets to carbon fiber definitive sockets on the criteria of cost, fabrication time, weight, comfort, and mobility.

Title: Comparative Analysis of Waste Generation and Structural Integrity of 3D Printed Devices and Thermoplastic Diagnostic Sockets for Transtibial Prostheses.

Purpose: The purpose of this graduate student research proposal is to establish a comparative analysis focusing on the waste generation and reusability of 3D printed and traditionally crafted thermoplastic PET-G diagnostic sockets specifically designed for transtibial prostheses by comparing their cost, amount of material used, strength, and durability. We hypothesize that recycled 3D printed PET-G test sockets will have equivalent strength to traditionally fabricated test sockets, produce less waste, and will lower costs.



WHY DID YOU BECOME A CERTIFIED ORTHOTIST AND/OR PROSTHETIST?

By Mellisa Warden, CSUDH student

Typically, the first question to be asked in most residency and job interviews shares a lot about the field and where we are headed. As a 43-year-old with a traumatic amputation who ran her own business for close to two decades while also working in the veterinary field, I come with a little skepticism and a lot of hope that we can elevate patient success, continue to advocate for our profession and our patients, while also taking advantage of technology to create the best products for increased patient satisfaction...and just maybe even ease the workload.

While lobbying in Washington DC in 2023 with NCOPE for the Advocacy Forum, I was surrounded by students, practitioners, and device users from across the country working to change the narrative from, "WHAT is not covered", to "WHY is this not covered". The first thing I learned seeing top orthopedic surgeons for 2nd, 3rd, and 12th opinions was not to ask if something was possible, but why was it NOT possible. Patients are exhausted from pain and managing daily household tasks, so when doctor and O&P appointments are added in, it becomes clear that they need us to step up and advocate not just for them, but for our profession. By the end of my day lobbying, I had progressed from explaining the value of the bills headed to Congress and changed the narrative to a constituency focused approach that would have a greater impact on those in office. On March 20, there will be an opportunity for all practitioners in the state and their patients to descend on Sacramento to be seen and have their stories heard. Showing up is half the battle, whether it is working out or advocating for others. I urge you to show up on March 20th, if not for the future of our field, then for the future of our patients and their successes.

The simple truth is that you will be unable to take care of others if you are not able to adequately take care of yourself. As such, declining reimbursements, reduced access to care (through acquisitions, mergers, etc.), and increased costs in education with corresponding salaries that no longer match the investment are making it more difficult for the average person to enter the field, let alone provide quality care to their patients. Eventually work-life balance becomes difficult to manage. This is where newly graduating

students with experience firsthand with new technologies become essential to the future. In most industries, larger companies invest in technology and infrastructure to "obsolete" smaller private shops through better products, reduced lead times, and lower costs, but O&P provides the perfect opportunity for innovation, developing high quality devices with improved lead times and more patient centered care. Unfortunately, with the cost of living and resident salaries not aligning in California, I continue to hear practitioners struggle to gain quality candidates as residents and employees.

Take heart, the story is not over and not everything is doom and gloom. We have two outstanding universities producing practitioners that can incite change. With the LA Olympics quickly approaching in 2028, a movement is sweeping the country called, "So Everyone Can Move", placing the responsibility of providing running prostheses back onto private insurers for K3 ambulators. The goal is to

have 28 states with legislation signed by 2028. This is an excellent opportunity for fresh faces to step up and take the lead. Even while in school, there are opportunities to speak on behalf of patients and practitioners through a united front.

We all bring life experiences to the field of O&P that can directly impact the future of the profession. Now is the time for the field to unite to stop the declining reimbursements and increase the quality of patient care. I encourage every practitioner, student, and patient to attend legislative days in Sacramento and in Washington DC to advocate on behalf of our field and care, because we are the future. If you do not like the answer, change the way you ask the question to lead those who make the decisions to the correct answer. And along the way, always remember to ask yourself, "Why did I decide to become a Certified Orthotist and/or Prosthetist?"



CLINICAL EDUCATION DAYS

up to **9** available credit hours



In this free in-person educational event, hear from the SPS Clinical Services team and experts from Bulldog Tools, Inc., Click Medical, and Cypress Adaptive, as they delve into wide range of relevant topics to help you enhance your clinic workflow and improve patient outcomes.

Clinicians qualified to receive credits include ABC Certified Clinicians and BOC Certified Clinicians.

WHY REGISTER?

- Up to 9 available credit hours (7.75 scientific and 1.25 business)
- Complimentary breakfast and lunch
- Networking with fellow O&P professionals

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 27, 2024	Napa Valley, CA
April 18, 2024	St Louis, MO
May 23, 2024	Tampa, FL

Registration is free, follow the link to register today:
click.spsco.com/edudays



ADVOCATING FOR A BETTER FUTURE - AN INTERVIEW WITH LINDA COLLINS

By JJ Quizon, Loma Linda University student

Colleagues, family and friends would describe Linda Collins as eternally optimistic who loves new challenges and enjoys human interactions. She loves taking on new challenges and adventures whether it's trying a new hiking trail or kayaking spot. She's never been one who says, "it's not my job." She learns all aspects of a situation and welcomes new opportunities.

Linda has decades of experience in the O&P field as she's worked in companies like DJO, Össur and currently as an insurance expert for Pacific Medical. Though not a clinician who directly works with patients, she's always enjoyed helping behind the scenes, making it easier for patients to get the right products, and for practitioners to be reimbursed for them.

When asked how the industry has personally affected her life, she ecstatically responded, "I'm proud to be a part of it!" She detailed experiences when her background opened conversations with O&P device users she sees in public. Patients may sometimes feel awkward or alienated with their assistive device, but Linda has used her knowledge to boldly talk about it. She found patients want to share their unique experience instead of letting it be an unspoken issue.



The invisibility patients feel about their condition is an experience practitioners face in their careers as well. Linda stated one of the challenges in the O&P community is "[not recognizing] the value of what clinicians provide." General public as well as medical professionals don't understand the training and skill required to take care of our unique patient population. It's the reason why it's essential to bring more lay people such as legislators into our clinics, invite them to come and see the challenges and accomplishments our patients and industry experience.

Despite obstacles in the field, Ms. Collins continues to serve the O&P community because of clinicians who truly care. "The majority of people in the profession genuinely care [and I'm] inspired by you all," she sentimentalized. She recommended practitioners can best support office managers and assistants by being on the same page in terms of what billing and insurance requirements are. Both office and clinical staff need to understand specific methods and qualifications for products. Clinicians have to properly document it, and the administrative team can support by creating checklists to guide them.

Passion in organizing and bringing people together are qualities the O&P reimbursement veteran brings to her new role as chairwoman of COPA's education committee. She was part of the committee for six years, left, and came back because she "wanted to be involved in the profession in a bigger way." When she was invited to step in to succeed Maynard Carkhuff, she accepted the position to bring something new and insightful to the association. She hopes COPA and the O&P community will grow through advocacy. "We need to help patients advocate for themselves as we're fighting insurance companies and state laws," she added.

When asked why it's important for COPA members to actively participate, she responded with three things: first, it elevates the reputation of the profession; second, it builds a great network where we can learn from each other; and third, "it's just fun." She is most excited about this year's symposium as the date, location and theme are finalized. The committee is bringing it to the next level as they recruit great presenters, and bring ideas and topics that will elevate the O&P field.

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COPA MEMBERSHIP

by *Brendan Erickson, COPA Membership Committee Chairman*

Hello COPA Member,

As the COPA Membership Committee Chairman, I am pleased to reach out to you to both celebrate a very fruitful 2023 and to share in the excitement of 2024 for the Association. In previous years, I started this letter stating COPA has a tremendous amount of momentum and is poised to have a very impactful following year. It was true then and is even truer now. The snowball effect within membership and networking has begun. As such I have to say this with emphasis:

Thank you for being a valuable member. Thank you for your effort. Thank you for your engagement. COPA cannot make an impact without you.

COPA member involvement is critical to the success of our strategic initiatives, and we need your support now more than ever. Our strength is in our members, and our voice grows louder as we expand. To renew your membership, please visit to www.californiaoandp.com. You then must login, click on My Account and select to renew. To make this easier from year to year, we have added a new auto-renew feature. Please be sure to check the box to auto-renew. You may also pay over the phone by contacting the administration at **626.244.2696** or mailing a check to our Pasadena office: **2700 Foothill Blvd., Suite 209 Pasadena, CA 91107.**

I mentioned that with expansion our voice grows louder. I ask you to make it a new year's resolution to please refer COPA to any industry colleagues that would like to get involved.

To remind you and any potential members of our recent momentum and success, here are some quick bullets of COPA's recent 2023 achievements.

California Medi-Cal Reimbursement Improvement Efforts

- Identified two dozen legislative targets for grassroots facility tours, in effort to secure MCO tax revenue for an increase in Medi-Cal O&P reimbursement rates.
- Completed 8 in person legislator tours of O&P facilities (To get involved with Facility Tours email COPA President Spencer Greene at sgreene@hanger.com)
- Completed 14 meetings with CA legislators to raise awareness of the challenges that our industry faces.
- Partnered with AOPA to support the Patient Centered Care Act nationally.

Successful 10% Medi-Cal rate increase for O&P

- This is a restoration of the 10% Medi-Cal provider rate cut for O&P implemented by then Governor Brown in 2011 by way of AB 97 (Chapter 3, Statutes of 2011), which required the California Department of Health Care

Services to reduce most Medi-Cal provider payments by 10%, with limited exceptions. COPA was able to negotiate an agreement between Governor Newsom and the Legislature on the 10% Medi-Cal rate restoration for O&P.

2023 COPA Symposium

- Over 20 Vendors/Exhibitors
- Over 95 Total Attendees
- Keynote by Drs. Li & Schofield from UC Davis

Education Webinars

- Completed Six Successful Webinars
- Averaging 75 attendees per webinar.
 - Topics included clinical education, business resources & industry trends

COPA Connection Newsletter

- Quarterly news & updates
- Letter from the president
- Supplier member advertisement availability
- Audience of over 800 industry professionals

COPA Membership

- Membership grew to the largest amount ever in 2023
- 4 new facilities and 3 new manufacturers joined COPA
- Over 40 CA O&P Companies are COPA Members
 - Over 300 Proxy Members
- 16 Supplier Members

Success is now the COPA standard. Let's use our momentum together to make 2024 even better. On behalf of the entire COPA Board of Directors and the membership committee, THANK YOU for being a valued member of COPA. Please continue to be involved in our activities and our success. Cheers to COPA in 2024!

Sincerely,

Brendan Erickson
Chairman, Membership Committee
COPA

