

The Care Digest

"Improving the Quality of Your Life is Our Primary Concern."



Vol 1. Issue 3 2007

The Care Digest ... keeping you informed about what's going on in the prosthetic and orthotic industry right here in St. Louis and around the world!

Policy Update...

MO Medicaid Reinstates Payment for Orthotic Devices

The Missouri State Legislature has just re-instated payment for orthotic devices, which it stripped from coverage in 2005 in a rash of cuts to the program. A judge ruled last year that Missouri violated federal law in its arbitrary decisions to cover some devices and not others. P&O Care in July received the new fee schedule from Medicaid, outlining how much they will pay for custom braces, boots and shoes, and other orthotic devices..



Medicaid Symbol

In 2005, the Missouri State Legislature was ready to cut prosthetics from Medicaid coverage, but citizens from across the state began calling their legislators. P&O Care's Clinical Director Jon Wilson, CPO, our CEO, Jim Weber, and one of our patients testified before a legislative committee. At the time, the trade journal O&P Almanac reported that it was their testimony that saved prosthetic coverage for Medicaid recipients, but unfortunately orthotic coverage was still stripped.

This led to the bizarre situation in which Missouri would pay thousands of dollars for a prosthesis but would not pay a few hundred dollars for a custom boot that could have prevented the amputation. Now two years later, we're thankful that they've finally decided to pay for both.

A Chance Encounter Lifts Two Amputees



Sharon Posing for Camera

Fifteen years ago, Denise lost her left leg above the knee during her freshman year of college. In a chance encounter in the P&O Care waiting room a couple of months ago, Denise met Sharon, a new amputee, and changed her life.

Sharon lost her leg recently when she was hit by a car in a St. Louis-area mall parking lot. Seeing and talking with another woman about the same age, with the same AK amputation from trauma and the same difficulties shopping for shoes and jeans, gave Sharon the courage to look forward to her own future with confidence. The encounter also excited Denise, who got to see new technology now available that could replace her old prosthesis.



Jon Wilson and Denise filming the show

Next month, Denise and Sharon will be featured in a segment about P&O Care on American Health Front, a half-hour show about advances in medical technology. It will air after the evening news on KMOV 4, September 6, at 6:30 pm. The show features the relationships that our prosthetists and orthotists develop with their patients, and special relationships patients may develop with each other, which we feel make P&O Care a special place.

Run, Oscar, Run!

Oscar Pistorius Sprints Toward the Beijing Olympics...



*Oscar Pistorius Sprints to the Finish using
Passive Prosthetic Feet*

The most famous amputee in the world right now might just be South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius.

The Paralympic world record holder in the 100, 200, and 400 meter races is trying to qualify to represent his country in the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China, but not without protest from the IAAF, which governs the Olympics. Some people worry that Pistorius' two prosthetic feet give him an unfair advantage over able-bodied athletes. Tests are now being done, and the outcome will determine if Oscar gets to compete against the most elite runners in the world or if he'll have to stick to racing against other amputees.

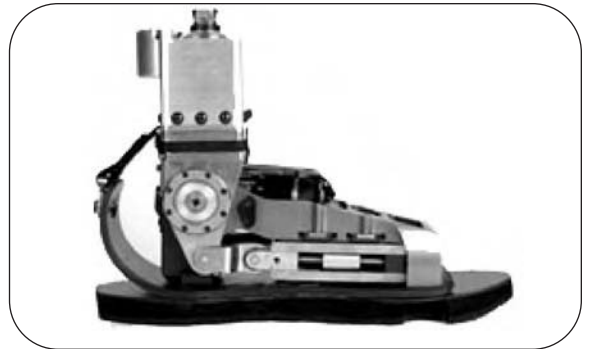
Oscar Pistorius doesn't have calves. His J-Shaped "Cheetas," passive prosthetic feet powered entirely by his quadriceps, mimic the spring of the human foot and achilles tendon. But whereas the spring in the our step can return over 200% of the energy we put into it, Pistorius' feet only return less than 95% energy, because he has no calves.

One objection claims that Oscar's prostheses don't fill with lactic acid during a race like an able-bodied runner, but weakening calves still provide more

energy than the best passive mechanical device.

Other objections state that Pistorius' legs are more aerodynamic than human legs and don't use energy from his body. However, gait studies have always shown that below-the-knee amputees actually burn more calories and use more oxygen moving the same distance as able-bodied people. Again, the man has no calves! He's so slow

exploding out the blocks that the second half of his 400m is actually faster than the first.



iWalk Prosthetic Foot Incorporates Computerized Motors



The PowerFoot One Prosthetic Foot by iWalk

The PowerFoot One prosthetic foot, recently manufactured by iWalk, actually incorporates computer processors and battery-powered motors to replace the function of the calf and achilles tendon. This and other bionic devises like Ossur's Power Knee promise to enhance the prosthetic industry, if their size, weight, and price can ever come down. When that day comes, the IAAF better watch out! But until then, there's no way that passive prosthetic feet like the ones Oscar Pistorius wears could give anyone an unfair advantage over sprinters with calves.

Hemicorporectomy Prosthesis Discovered

Michael Mason had to travel to Baghdad for his last story. His article "Iraq's Medical Meltdown" appeared in the July issue of Discover Magazine. This time, Michael came to St. Louis. He is working on a story about one of the most radical surgeries anyone could undergo - hemicorporectomy, which in plain English means the body gets cut in half, right below the belly button.

Last Friday, Mason was in town interviewing Dr. Frank Johnson at St. Louis University, who performs the procedure, and Jon Wilson CPO, at P&O Care, who has developed a prosthesis that helps these amputees live normal lives. Saturday, he was on to Kansas City to visit one of their patients living with the device, John Neill. Shaped like a bucket and lined with ROHO cushions to distribute pressure, the prosthesis enables hemicorporectomy, or trans-lumbar, amputees to sit upright, walk with their hands, and even drive a car. Without it, they would be confined to a bed, where they could develop the same sores that often caused their amputation.



Jon Neill, Hemicorporectomy Patient

Jon Wilson's abstract, "A New Concept in Prosthetic Interface Design For Hemicorporectomy Amputees Utilizing ROHO Comprehension Therapy: A Case Study for a Prosthetist's Perspective," received the prestigious Howard R. Thranhardt Lecture Honorarium from the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association. Look for Michael Mason's story about hemicorporectomy in the September or October editions of Discover Magazine, which is currently read by over two million people every month.

Technician Profile.....

Mark "Doc" Woodson, Certified Prosthetic Technician



Mark "Doc" Woodson Fabricates a Prosthetic Socket

Doc's been there from the beginning. P&O Care's Director of Fabrication opened the company in 2002 with Jim Weber, Jon Wilson, and Wanda Stephens. Since then, we've grown to twenty employees including seven practitioners, several of whom Doc has trained. He taught our prosthetists Greg Doerr and Manny Rivera how to fabricate artificial limbs back when they were first getting into the field, and now he's training intern Luke Brewer before he goes off to Northwestern Medical School's prosthetic and orthotic program in Chicago.

Doc leads our team of technicians, whom patients rarely see but who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure their limbs and braces get done on time, fit right, and look spectacular.

Doc got into prosthetics back in the early Nineties, a few years after losing his leg below the knee in a trucking accident. He always enjoyed creating things with his hands and helping people, so he was a perfect fit for fabricating prosthetic limbs. Doc says he gets special enjoyment from making the limbs our pediatric patients use to walk.

A single father, he and his son love to take road trips out West, often deciding each day where to go next. Doc also has a special knack for numbers and has become better than anyone else at P & O Care at predicting our monthly budget totals based on the devices in fabrication. Always competitive and ambitious—and incredibly funny—Doc drives all of us to continually improve the quality of care we provide our patients.

Manuel “Manny” Rivera, ABC Certified Prosthetist

When he was three years old, Manuel Rivera’s family moved from Chile to St. Louis seeking political asylum. Last year, after working several years as the Practice Manager for a prosthetic company in Miami, Florida, Manny moved back to St. Louis. A marathon runner, Manny is energetic and always smiling. He works hard to inspire his patients to go the distance and reach new heights.

In 1998, Manny graduated from the University of Illinois with a bachelor of science in kinesiology, emphasis in biomechanics. After college, Manny completed the prosthetic program at Northwestern Medical School in Chicago, and he became an ABC Certified Prosthetist in 2002. Manny joined the P&O Care team in March of 2006. His popularity with surgeons and therapists has made him a familiar face all over town. His ability to speak both English and Spanish also enables us to better serve St. Louis’ growing Latino population.



Manuel “Manny” Rivera, C.O.
Staff Orthotist



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