

Orthotist and Prosthetist

Orthotics and prosthetics are applied physical disciplines that address neuromuscular and structural skeletal problems in the human body with a treatment process that includes evaluation and transfer of forces using orthoses and prostheses to achieve optimum function, prevent further disability, and provide cosmesis.

The orthotist and prosthetist work directly with the physician and representatives of other allied health professions in the rehabilitation of the physically challenged. The orthotist designs and fits devices, known as orthoses, to provide care to patients who have disabling conditions of the limbs and spine. The prosthetist designs and fits devices, known as prostheses, for patients who have partial or total absence of a limb.



History

The American Board of Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics developed an institutional accreditation program in 1972 and set out to establish criteria to assess and compare orthotics and prosthetics curricula. From these criteria, *Standards (Essentials)* were developed and revised to meet the profession's needs in training orthotists and prosthetists.

In 1991, the EAC was reorganized and renamed the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE). NCOPE's primary mission and obligation is to ensure that educational programs meet the minimum standards of quality to prepare individuals to enter the orthotics and prosthetics profession.

In 1992, the NCOPE and its collaborating organizations, the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) and the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (AAOP), applied to the AMA Council on Medical Education (CME) for recognition of orthotics and prosthetics as an allied health profession. Recognition was granted in August 1992.

The *Standards* were adopted in 1993 and revised in 2001 and 2005.



Career Description

The role of the orthotist and prosthetist includes, but may not be limited to, five major domains: clinical assessment, patient management, technical implementation, practice management, and professional responsibility.



Employment Characteristics

Orthotists and prosthetists typically provide their services in one or more of the following settings: private facilities, hospitals and clinics, colleges and universities, and medical schools.



Salary

According to the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education, the salary for board-certified orthotists and prosthetists averages between \$42,000 and \$60,000. For more information, refer to www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Educational Programs

Length. Orthotic and/or prosthetic education occurs in two forms: baccalaureate degree and certificate programs. Degree programs are based on a standard 4-year curriculum, and certificate courses range from 6 months to 1 year for one discipline to 18 months to 2 years for both disciplines.

Prerequisites. Applicants for the 4-year baccalaureate degree programs should have a high school diploma or equivalent and meet institutional entrance requirements. Applicants for postbaccalaureate programs should have a baccalaureate degree that includes appropriate coursework in biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, algebra, human anatomy, and physiology, as well as any other specified by the institution.

Curriculum. The professional curriculum includes formal instruction in biomechanics gait analysis/pathomechanics, kinesiology, pathology, materials science, research methods, diagnostic imaging techniques, measurement, impression taking, model rectification, diagnostic fitting, definitive fitting, postoperative management, external power, static and dynamic alignment of sockets related to various amputation levels, and fitting and alignment of orthoses for lower limb, upper limb, and spine with various systems to be included. The curriculum also includes a clinical experience.



Inquiries

Careers

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Certification

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Program Accreditation

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