

# O&P Trends & Statistics

**At present, O&P graduates have a 100 percent employment rate and most choose to make it a lifelong profession.**



*The information outlined below is from an updated 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 and Prosthetics (ABC).*

## Projected Demand for Orthotists/Prosthetists

- ◆ The total number of persons with paralysis, deformity or orthopedic impairments is expected to increase by 25 percent from 5.9M in 2000 to 7.3M by the year 2020.
- ◆ The total number of persons with an amputation, and those using a prosthesis, is expected to increase by at least 47 percent from 1.6M in 1995 to 2.4M by the year 2020.
- ◆ The number of persons using orthoses is expected to increase by at least 31 percent from 5.6M in 1995 to 7.3M by the year 2020.
- ◆ Projecting a mere 10 percent increase in graduates in the year 2005 and another 10 percent increase in 2010, the number of prosthetists and orthotists available will still not be adequate to serve the total population of persons with these impairments.
- ◆ Without an increase in graduates, the projected number of orthotists available in the year 2020 will be able to serve only 61 percent or less of the population using orthoses.
- ◆ Without an increase in graduates, the projected number of prosthetists available in the year 2010 will be able to serve only 66 percent or less of the population using prostheses.
- ◆ In 2006, there were 5,295 practitioners certified by the American Board for Certification. Of this total number 39 percent (2,070) were certified orthotists, 25 percent (1,322) were certified prosthetists and 36 percent (1,903) were certified in both disciplines.
- ◆ 18 percent of the 5,295 ABC certified practitioners are 55 years of age or older and likely to consider retirement within the next ten years.

## **Trends in Amputations**

- ◆ The incidence of diabetes and diabetes-related amputations continues to increase. The number of Americans with diabetes is projected to increase 165 percent, from 11M in 2000 to 29M by 2050.
- ◆ Any reductions in peripheral vascular disease and diabetes-related amputations as a result of intervention programs are likely to be offset by increases, from eight percent in 1950 to 15 percent in 2010, in the proportion of the high risk population in the 61-70 year age group.
- ◆ The number of trauma-related amputations are likely to continue to decrease at a slow rate due to safer machinery, improved safety conditions and advanced medical techniques. Unfortunately, the incidence of war-related amputations may offset this decline.
- ◆ Amputations due to osteogenic sarcoma are decreasing through technological advancements.
- ◆ The incidence of congenital limb deficiencies is likely to remain relatively constant accounting for about three percent of all amputations.

## **Trends in Orthopedic Impairments**

- ◆ Data indicate increasing growth in use of orthoses, particularly among the 18-44 age group.
- ◆ The proportion of the population ages 18-44 will decline slightly by 2010. The number of persons using orthoses, however, is increasing at a higher rate due to improved designs and reduced costs.
- ◆ In 2010, as the Baby Boomers reach the ages of 46-64, the proportion of the population at greatest risk of back injuries and paralysis will increase requiring a greater number of certified orthotists.

## **Health Care Trends**

- ◆ Reimbursements for technologically advanced O&P care will be increasingly dependent on demonstrating improved quality of life and long-term cost-effectiveness.
- ◆ An increase in the number of insurers requiring patient care to be provided by ABC-certified orthotists/prosthetists would increase the number of certified practitioners required to meet patient needs.

For more information on careers in O&P, call the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists at (703) 836-0788 or visit [www.opcareers.org](http://www.opcareers.org).