

SHOULD BRACE AND LIMB HOUSES SELL SHOES?

by

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Many brace and limb houses are now selling orthopedic shoes, particularly those types prescribed for children; and beyond business considerations, suppliers feel that they are rendering a service to their doctors and their communities.

Often, special shoes are at the core of the treatment of foot problems in children. Tiny boots with open toes are used in correcting club foot and similar anomalies in babies; they may be used after casting for retention purposes or possibly with Denis Browne splints. From the second year onward, inflare and outflare walking shoes, curved and wedged, are used in controlling pronation and metatarsus varus. Surgical boots are used at all ages for wearing with braces and appliances.

Children's orthopedic shoes are not a new idea: Tarso Supinator and Tarso Pronator shoes were introduced over twenty-five years ago. There has been, however, a marked upswing in sales during recent years; and, medically, the idea still has enormous potential. Unquestionably there are many doctors who would be more disposed to prescribing special shoes if they knew such prescriptions could be filled readily.

For consistently good results with orthopedic shoes, a fitter must be within easy reach, and the right sizes must be available and supplied promptly. Accurate fitting requires that different size and width combinations be tried on. Doctors, moreover, insist that shoes be fitted immediately after removal of casts and won't tolerate the delays attendant upon mail ordering.

Since sales are usually limited to a few basic types of shoes, stock requirements, dollarwise, are not great. The majority of sales are usually concentrated within a given age group. A fairly active orthopedic or pediatric office can generate enough prescriptions to justify a modest stock. Sales potential increases when an orthopedic hospital happens to be nearby.

Orthopedic shoes certainly belong in brace and limb houses as much or more than in ordinary shoe stores. Brace and limb people work closely with doctors and enjoy their confidence and respect. They understand anatomy, and practical experience in exact fitting of these shoes can be acquired. Shoe fitting can be mastered easily when you have adequate supplies of shoes to work with.

Where the need exists in any community, brace and limb establishments should consider an investment in stocking special orthopedic shoes and the acquisition of fitting techniques a genuine part of their responsibility.

* The M. J. Markell Shoe Co., Inc., an associate member of OALMA, serves many members of the brace and limb profession as a supplier of all types of children's orthopedic shoes. Additional information concerning these shoes can be secured by writing to this company at 332 South Broadway, Yonkers, N. Y.