

# The Committee on Prosthetics Education and Information

## National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council A Report

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The initial report concerning the Committee on Prosthetics Education and Information that appeared in the March 1961 issue of this Journal was devoted to an historical outline of the origin of this committee as an integral part of the Artificial Limb Program of the National Academy of Sciences. It was pointed out that the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Veterans Administration requested the Prosthetics Research Board to organize an Academy-Research Council committee to supplement the programs of the University of California at Los Angeles and New York University prosthetics schools in the broad field of prosthetics education and information. This report will be devoted to certain of the initial activities of the group that were primarily of a planning and fact-finding character.

The committee early recognized that by its very nature CPEI could best serve the interests of the supporting agencies by assuming an advisory and coordinating role in developing and executing a program for the purpose of extending the potential benefits deriving from the Artificial Limb Program to our amputee population. It was therefore agreed that a major effort be directed toward enlisting the assistance and cooperation of other individuals and organized groups who have an interest in improving amputee rehabilitation services in this country. This technique has been the essence of success of almost every educational movement. By this means, the influence of the committee can be magnified many, many times. To initiate a campaign of this character, it was necessary to make liaison with the relevant medical and paramedical organizations, to locate interested individuals throughout the country, to develop practical plans and to provide a focal office for inter-communication and staff support. During their first year, the committee made very satisfactory progress in these general areas.

In considering the development of specific plans for a national prosthetics education program, the committee recognized the need for factual information concerning the status of prosthetics services that are presently available for non-veteran amputees in the United States. For this purpose, a questionnaire survey was directed to the physician graduates of the UCLA and NYU prosthetics schools in the fall of 1958. The physicians were invited to include in their replies suggestions and comments in the interest of assisting CPEI in developing its program. Some 300 physicians from all sections of the country contributed to this survey that provided the committee with factual information upon which to base their plans and establish priorities of effort. The following areas of activity in the field of prosthetics education were emphasized by the reporting physicians as being of major importance:

a. The introduction of appropriate prosthetics materials into medical education at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, in order that the oncoming generation of physicians will be oriented with respect to the modern concepts of amputee care and management.

b. The development of a prosthetics informational program for the practicing physicians who perform amputations in the interest of providing these patients with the opportunity to achieve a maximum of functional regain through proper surgery, post-operative care, preprosthetic training, and referral to an organized amputee clinic for the prosthetic prescription, the fitting of the device to the individual and his training in the use of the prosthesis. This activity has been termed the "grass-roots" program and will be the subject of a subsequent report in this series of articles.

In addition to providing information with respect to the status of prosthetics services in various regions of the United States, the survey was the means of locating the majority of the amputee clinics in this country, together with their composition and case load. Of especial importance to the committee was the identification of physician members of prosthetics clinics who hold faculty positions in medical schools and/or are engaged in residency training programs. The high percentage of physicians who responded to this survey and their evident desire to keep current with newer knowledge relating to the care and management of amputees testifies to the fact that individuals who have received specialized training in prosthetics retain an active interest in this field of disability.

In view of the varied type of educational activities that it was essential to develop for the members of the various disciplines involved in amputee rehabilitation, in the spring of 1959 it was decided to organize *ad hoc* subcommittees that would devote their efforts to specific areas of the program. By this means, the base of support for the committee in terms of participating individuals would be materially increased without enlargement of the parent committee. The first of these groups, the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Prosthetics in Medical Education, was formed in April 1959. There are today four *ad hoc* subcommittees, each with its own specific program. Subsequent articles in this Journal will report upon the activities of these groups.

CPEI was originally organized as a standing committee of the Prosthetics Research Board. That body, at a meeting in Washington on May 5, 1959, recommended to the Academy-Research Council that their Board be dissolved as of June 30, 1959, and that the responsibilities of the PRB in the field of prosthetics research and development be transferred to the Committee on Prosthetics Research and Development. The Prosthetics Research Board further recommended that the Committee on Prosthetics Education and Information, by reason of the fact that its entire program of activities lay in the broad field of medical education, be transferred from the Division of Engineering and Industrial Research to the Division of Medical Sciences. With Academy approval, these organizational changes were effected on July 1, 1959, and the Committee on Prosthetics Education and Information assumed an autonomous status. At this time it was agreed by all of the principals in the Program that close liaison between CPRD and CPEI would be maintained. For this purpose, the Academy staffs of the two committees occupy the same suite of offices in Washington and the Chairman of CPEI is a member of CPRD.