

Titles Don't Make It So!

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During the past months I have attended numerous meetings of national societies and associations which are working in one way or another with the physically disabled. Included in a list of these would be our own American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association, the National Rehabilitation Association, the Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults. In thinking back and comparing these meetings one would have to admit that the aims of each organization differ from the others and, as a result, their meetings differ.

The purposes of these organizations are only of passing interest in this article. Of much more interest is the fact that at each of these meetings at least one three-hour period was devoted to an educational seminar in prosthetics and orthotics. Seemingly, national meetings are not considered to be well balanced unless they include educational seminars on technical subjects. But what are the effects of such educational seminars?

About two years ago a doctor attended an educational seminar where he was introduced to the field of prosthetics. He was so impressed that when later confronted with a young woman who had traumatically lost her left arm at the shoulder he assured her that she would be fitted with a prosthetic appliance that not only would resemble her anatomical arm, but also would function in much the same way as her missing member had. To this day the young lady does not wear a prosthesis.

More recently a prosthetist attended an educational seminar in which many techniques currently under study by a research facility were introduced. The prosthetist, deciding that he had sufficient understanding of these techniques, attempted to incorporate these in his fabrication of appliances. When the techniques failed to yield the desired results the prosthetist condemned the research program in general, and the techniques in particular. Today, when they have become accepted practice, this prosthetist states that they are of no value to the amputee because of his premature experience with the techniques.

A rehabilitation counselor attended one of these seminars and decided that the prosthetists and orthotists in his area were incompetent to provide the services to his clients without extensive training. He, too, did not differentiate between current practices and research problems.

The questions raised in these three examples are not peculiar to our fields of prosthetics and orthotics. They are not answered by discontinuing

¹ The Committee on Education of the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association is a working committee. The current membership of the committee is:
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While continuing its work on the Regional Seminar programs the Committee is now engaged in preparing materials on business management programs.

educational seminars. They are answered by pre-planning and organization of material. Each presenter of material must decide before his presentation on what points he wishes his audience to take home with them. His entire presentation must be built around these points which can only be made through his understanding of the subject matter and of his audience. An educational seminar is not educational just because it is labeled so in the program. Titles don't make it so!

As a further extension of this thought we would differentiate between three types of programs which may be presented under the title of educational programs. These are information programs, training programs and finally educational programs. Instead of defining each of these we will compare them so that the distinctions between each may be most clear.

First, an educational program is presented in an organized way to increase the audience's background knowledge about the subject matter; an informational program is also presented to increase background knowledge but in a much less organized way and without depth; a training program is more immediate and gives knowledge of how to perform without the background of why this performance is necessary or how it fits in to the total task.

Second, a training program is presented to change the behavior of the audience, the way they do things; an educational program is also presented in an effort to change behavior, not through "brain washing" techniques, but through the comparison of techniques on the basis of advantages and disadvantages; an informational program may whet an audience's interest in a behavioral change but seldom contains sufficient material to bring about the change.

Third, an educational program must be planned and presented under controlled conditions which are conducive to learning; a training program must also be planned and presented under controlled conditions; an informational program, while sometimes planned, is seldom presented under conditions in which learning is assured.

The distinction between these three types of programs are clear. To title all of them as educational is misleading. We must decide on the correct title in advance, based on the material to be presented, the objectives of the presentation, and the audience to be reached. This is the task of the Committee on Education of American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association as it works to bring an educational program to the members of the Association.

In so doing the committee has recognized one further complication. It is that persons attending the *same* program may find that it increases their background knowledge, or that it introduces them to a new way of approaching an old problem, or that it is just interesting. Providing an educational experience does not guarantee learning. Titles don't make it so!

The committee will continue to strive to present high caliber, educational programs. It is up to the membership to obtain the most from each one in which they participate.

In closing, let me share with you a most meaningful cliché —

**"THE MAN WHO KNOWS HOW WILL ALWAYS HAVE A JOB,
BUT HE WILL BE WORKING FOR THE MAN WHO KNOWS
WHY!"**