

AOPA'S Role in the Certification Movement

By ROBERT C. GRUMAN, C.P.

*President, American Orthotics
and Prosthetics Association*



PRESIDENT GRUMAN

The gentleman pictured on the cover of this issue of our *Journal*, Mr. George H. Lambert, Sr., is the current President of the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc. Mr. Lambert's presidency finds the Certification movement growing in influence—and also in acceptance by physicians and other members of rehabilitation teams.

Since many readers of the *Journal* are not members of the Association, I should like to use my column this month to report briefly on Certification and on the role of the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association in founding this program for the benefit of the public.

The responsibility of a Certified Orthotist or Prosthetist has been well stated by Mr. Lambert as "his obligation to dedicate himself to serving the patient, employing all of the highest of standards as set forth by the American Board for Certification and the medical profession. Furthermore, his responsibility is to keep abreast of the latest scientific, technical and medical advancements to better perform his duty."

This statement correctly summarizes the attitude of today's orthotist and prosthetist. What lies behind this nationwide acceptance?

It is the story of the year of efforts since the Association was founded in 1917 to set up standards so that the physician and his patient might be assured of the highest competency and ethics in the practice of prosthetics and orthotics.

Almost from the day this Association was organized in 1917, its members debated the question of how best to achieve this aim. Throughout the years officers and members studied this question at National meetings, discussed it with rehabilitation leaders and with members of the medical profession.

This intensive study culminated in the founding of the American Board for Certification in 1948 with three members of the Association putting their hands and seals to the CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION. That Certificate and the by-laws then adopted have stood for sixteen years the test of time and a growing movement.

The Purpose

The purpose is to establish standards for those engaged in the fitting of prosthetic or orthopedic appliances, particularly with respect to the ade-

quacy and cleanliness of facilities and proficiency and honesty in service rendered, and with the object of discouraging the practice of this profession by technically unqualified persons.

From the beginning, public interest has been represented by the naming of three physicians to the seven-man Board which directs the Certification Movement. Currently serving on the Board by nomination of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons are these three orthopedic surgeons: Cameron B. Hall, M.D., Claude Lambert, M.D. and Richard Jones, M.D. Dr. Hall is Vice President of the Board.

Types of Certification

1. *Certification of the individual technician* who has been qualified to make and fit various types of appliances. This individual is required to submit proof of four years experience in making and fitting of artificial limbs and braces. He takes a comprehensive oral and written examination in which members of the medical profession participate. Successful passing of the written examination has been an ironclad rule since it was established in 1951.

2. *Certification of the physical facilities in which orthopedic and prosthetic service is provided.* The skill of the individual technician is only part of the complete prosthetic and orthopedic service. The ethical conduct of the establishment in which he works—the provision of proper facilities and machinery, waiting rooms—maintaining correct professional relations with the physician and with the agency—all these are part of the Certified Facility.

Who Are the Certified?

The Board publishes an annual Registry of Certified Facilities. This contains the names and addresses of the establishments which have met these rigid requirements in the United States and Canada.

Facilities which are Certified for both artificial limbs and braces are indicated by this symbol: "P & O" (prosthetic and orthopedic). The name of the manager or person in charge of the operations of the establishment is also given in the Registry, so that responsibility may be personalized and made direct.

The symbol "P" designates a person who has successfully completed the requirements for Certification as a prosthetist (limbmaker). The symbol "O" designates a person who has met similar requirements for Certification as orthotist. Both letters are used for the individual who has completed both sets of requirements.

Relationship with AOPA

Although the American Board for Certification is an entirely separate organization, it has from the beginning benefited from the assistance and cooperation of the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association. Both organizations share Washington Headquarters. The annual meeting of the American Board for Certification is held as a part of the National Assembly of the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association. The first President of the Board and three of his successors were also Presidents of the Association.

Three members of the Board are nominated by the Association.

The Future

Now in its sixteenth year, the American Board for Certification seems destined to continue to serve an important role in the field of orthotics and prosthetics. The American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association which did so much to establish the Board takes pride in its achievements with confidence in its future growth.

ROBERT C. GRUMAN