

Research: Getting to the Next Level

will continue in research and do some publishing and presentation," Edwards concludes.

What's the Prognosis for O&P Research?

The prognosis is hard to predict, says Geil. "The things we can predict are not always the best indicators of what will happen with research." Although there's a lack of advanced degrees in the field now, that situation is changing, Geil points out: "We are the first entry-level masters program in P&O; you'll see more coming. More thorough instruction on how to do research and actually conducting it would typically be involved with obtaining an advanced degree." Practitioners with advanced degrees doing a research project in their residency program will contribute a significant impact, he believes.

"It's going to take time for these programs to develop—for these students to graduate—for these advanced training courses to have an impact," Geil continues. "These efforts are all relatively new, so we're going to need to give them at least five years to see what sort of impact they'll have. But beyond that, I think we've got some real momentum going."

"So many practitioners are too busy making a living," reflects Hornbeak. "Any solution probably needs to happen as joint projects between the academic world and the manufacturers' research teams."

"Although lack of graduate programs and a lack of academic

centers that specialize in O&P research has been a handicap in the past, Northwestern and the University of Washington have been focused on P&O research for a long period of time," Edwards says. The closing of the P&O programs at New York University (NYU) and the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), where much of the research was done early on, was a setback, he says. "I believe that future practitioners and academic facilities will bring forward research to where it once flourished."

What Can We Do to Precipitate Progress?

"Practitioners or residency directors who are sponsoring residents need to allow them to do a quality research project," suggests Edwards, "and to allow time for them to do research during their residency so we can get quality projects to NCOPE [National Commission on Orthotic & Prosthetic Education]. Ultimately these projects will bring about increased awareness of research and improve the quality of care."  **QUICK FIND: EDPEAT1103**

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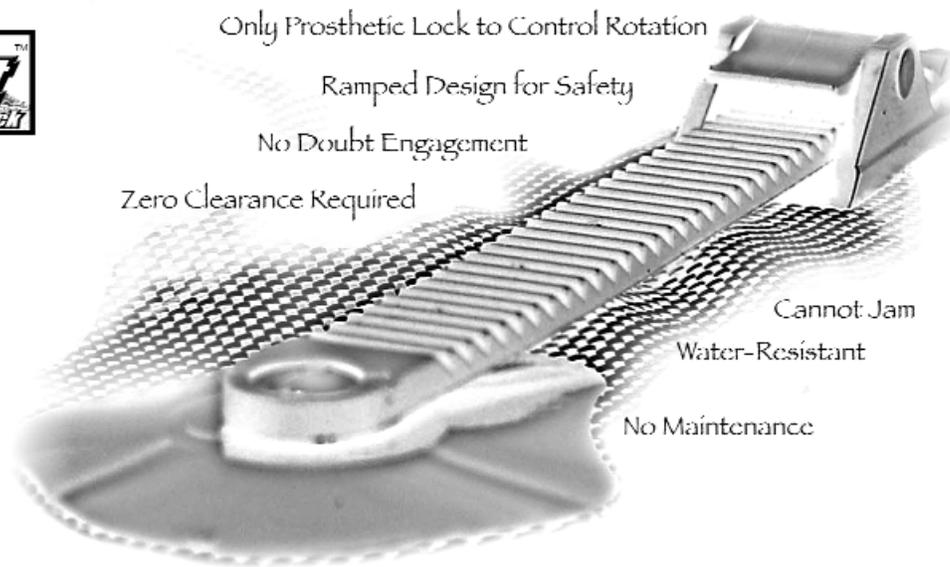
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