Continuing Education—Why’s It So Important?

Since its inception in 1948, ABC has maintained that education is vital to certification. As the profession grew and more people needed orthotic, prosthetic, and pedorthic care, ABC believed it was necessary to increase the educational standards necessary to obtain certification and implemented continuing education requirements to maintain one’s expertise in the profession. Individuals who are certified by ABC must obtain continuing education credits in order to maintain their credential.

Requiring continuing education encourages those certified in the profession to further their education, remain up-to-date with current trends, technologies, and innovations as they continue to grow their skills and knowledge base. The information learned from continuing education courses benefits the patient and allows the certified professional to provide optimal care.

“With the accelerated pace of technology and information, as well as the increased diversity of our field of care, it is crucial that individuals participate in the continuing education program to provide consistency and greater expertise throughout the profession,” said D. Deane Doty, Jr., CPO, ABC President.

ABC Launches Redesign of Consumer Website

ABC is pleased to announce the launch of its newly redesigned and updated consumer website, OandPCare.org. The redesign was initiated to provide consumers with valuable and more comprehensive information about the orthotic, prosthetic, and pedorthic professions. The website’s new contemporary look and feel makes navigating the site easier than ever before.

Additional Exams Provide More Opportunities (see page 2)
The Loss of Todd Anderson (see page 3)
CAAHEP Approves Masters for O&P (see page 4)
Additional Exams Provide More Opportunities for Certification Candidates

ABC has added a new set of dates for administering its computer-based certification exams for 2011. The new dates will give ABC a total of four exam administrations each year, allowing candidates additional opportunities to take the exams. The practitioner CPM exams will continue to be offered twice a year.

The ABC Board made the decision to add the additional exam administration to increase candidate access to the exam. The change also reflects the changing academic environment where orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic education occurs year round as opposed to the traditional academic year. "This change allows candidates for the ABC board exams more convenient access and gives those students who complete their education at various times throughout the year more opportunity to sit for their exam," said Catherine A. Carter, ABC Executive Director.

For more information on ABC’s certification exams and application deadlines, visit www.abcop.org.

The dates for the 2011 ABC certification examinations for orthotists, prosthetists, pedorthists, orthotic fitters, mastectomy fitters and therapeutic shoe fitters are:
- February 14-19
- May 9-14
- August 8-13
- November 14-19

ABC Launches Redesign of Consumer Website

(continued from pg1)

The website features an intuitive and more user friendly interface along with a detailed directory to locate care providers and facilities by state, city, zip code or profession. Each professional category includes frequently asked questions and glossary sections giving consumers valuable information on what they can expect during their relationship with their orthotist, prosthetist, pedorthist, or mastectomy fitter.

In addition to more patient specific information, the website also provides a section designed for caregivers or individuals supporting someone who is living with a prosthesis or orthosis. Whether they are caring for a loved one, a rehab patient, or providing long-term care, the information provided on the website will help them to understand the terminology and find resources for additional information and support.

ABC feels that it is important to aid consumers in finding the answers and resources they need for all of their orthotic, prosthetic, and pedorthic care needs. Given that in most states there are no requirements for education, certification, or licensure for orthotists, prosthetists, or pedorthists it is important for consumers to take a proactive approach in determining whom they choose to work with—being informed will only help them gain a positive outcome.

Check out the new website at www.oandpcare.org.
ABC Influences Change in the Taxonomy Codes

The National Uniform Claim Committee (NUCC) recently made, what ABC considers mostly positive changes to the Taxonomy Code. ABC requested changes to the existing code descriptions for orthotists, prosthetists, mastectomy, and orthotic fitters in order to better reflect contemporary practice in these professions. ABC also launched the effort to establish a specific code for pedorthists, who previously did not have a taxonomy code. Through ABC’s efforts, these changes become effective October 1, 2010.

ABC disagrees with NUCC’s decision not to establish a specific taxonomy code for therapeutic shoe fitters and will resubmit its request at the earliest possible opportunity. Further, ABC will seek an appeal regarding the language included by NUCC in the orthotic fitter description as it inappropriately includes custom orthoses.

Taxonomy codes, also called Specialty Codes, are an administrative code set for identifying the provider type and area of specialization for healthcare providers. These codes are maintained by NUCC and selected by providers to indicate their specialty area of practice. Some payers are beginning to request a provider’s taxonomy code to identify their specialty designation during the enrollment process. As the move towards better utilization of electronic data exchange continues, taxonomy codes are now being linked with a provider’s enrollment or re-enrollment; including the process to obtain a National Provider Identifier through the National Plan & Provider Enumeration System.

It should be noted that taxonomy codes are self-selected and do not infer an expansion of an individual’s ability to provide certain services. ABC believes that taxonomy codes should accurately reflect the nationally recognized scope of practice of credentialed and/or licensed individuals and, for the most part, these changes accomplish that goal.

According to Catherine A. Carter, ABC Executive Director, “ABC feels it is important to ensure that the taxonomy code descriptions are relevant to the contemporary practice in the profession. Plus, the fact that pedorthists did not have a code needed to be rectified. Requesting changes to the descriptions and obtaining a new pedorthist code involved a lengthy process but was something that ABC was absolutely committed to achieving.”

Additional information and a complete listing of all taxonomy codes are available at the National Uniform Claim Committee website, www.nucc.org.

ABC Mourns Loss of Todd Anderson

ABC mourns the loss of beloved board member, Todd F. Anderson, CP, FAAOP, who passed away suddenly on August 18.

Anderson was vice president of business services for Otto Bock Healthcare and a long time Director for ABC. Todd had served on the ABC Board since 2007 and was currently Secretary Treasurer.

Anderson had long been an active member of the ABC family, becoming certified in 1986. He was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse and received his prosthetic education at Century College in White Bear Lake, MN. Anderson was a greatly admired practitioner in the O&P profession, practicing at the Northwestern Artificial Limb and Brace Center in Minneapolis, ACME Labs in Green Bay, Wisc., and Shriners Hospital for Children in Minneapolis. He joined Otto Bock in 1999 and received his FAAOP in 2001.

Anderson also made notable contributions to orthotic and prosthetic education by serving as a Prosthetic Clinical Patient Examiner and Chairman of ABC’s Mandatory Continuing Education Committee.

Anderson’s strong spirit, kind disposition, and dedication to the field of O&P will not be forgotten. He will be sorely missed by all of those who knew him, friends and colleagues alike.

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Existing code changes:
Orthotists
Prosthetists
Mastectomy Fitters
Orthotic Fitters
New specific code:
Pedorthists

O&P profession, practicing at the Northwestern Artificial Limb and Brace Center in Minneapolis, ACME Labs in Green Bay, Wisc., and Shriners Hospital for Children in Minneapolis. He joined Otto Bock in 1999 and received his FAAOP in 2001.

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CAAHEP Approves Masters for O&P

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) has approved the revised standards for orthotic and prosthetic education. CAAHEP approved the revisions during its July 23 Summer Meeting in New Orleans, La.

CAAHEP’s decision to approve the standards was the culmination of a five-year effort by the National Commission for Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE). Together with education consultants and orthotic and prosthetic educators, NCOPE revised the standards and raised the minimum education level for orthotists and prosthetists to a master’s degree.

“NCOPE is pleased to see the entry-level education for O&P move to the master’s level and we look forward to working with all education programs that transition to this level,” noted NCOPE’s Executive Director, Robin Seabrook.

The new standards are effective immediately for any new programs seeking accreditation and all currently accredited programs will transition to the new standards by the end of 2012. Certificate-level programs may continue to enroll students that are extending their education to the other discipline until the end of 2014.

According to ABC Executive Director, Catherine A. Carter, “ABC fully supports this positive step for the O&P profession. We are excited about looking to the future and the evolution of the profession. This was the conclusion of significant work by a number of individuals and ABC commends NCOPE on achieving this extremely important milestone.”

ABC Certified Technician Exam Undergoes Changes

The ABC Technician Exam Committee recently announced its intention to make changes to the Technician Certification Exam. Currently, the exam is given twice a year at two locations and encompasses both written and multiple-choice components as well as a 6-hour practical examination. The committee plans to transition the exam to a computer-based exam starting in 2011. This revised exam will be available in 250 locations nationwide and its format will mirror ABC’s computer-based certification exams for all other disciplines.

There were several factors that led to the committee’s decision to make changes to the Technician Certification Exam. “ABC is aware that access to the technician exam as well as the cost of travel and time away from work has been an issue for individuals,” remarked Stephen Fletcher, CPO, LPO, Director of Clinical

(continued on page 5)
In 1988, ABC’s Mandatory Continuing Education Committee implemented continuing education requirements for practitioners in order to maintain their certification. By 1992, all technicians and assistants were required to obtain continuing education credits for their field. The fitter and pedorthic credentialing programs that were later adopted by ABC also required that individuals maintain continuing education credits for their professions. ABC has long recognized the need for effective professional continuing education. Continuing education is the norm in the healthcare profession and serves to maintain and improve the system and delivery of care.

According to Curt Bertram, CO, ABC Director, “Continuing education shows that ABC certified individuals have the commitment to providing the best care possible to their patients. Continuing education is extremely important to the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic profession and continues to be a key component in maintaining a credential with ABC.”

Changing to the computer-based format will greatly increase access to the exam as well as lower the overall cost for technicians.”

While ABC will be offering four computer-based exam administrations each year, starting in February 2011, the Certified Technician Exam will only be given three times in its inaugural year. The first administration will be in May 2011. October, 2010 will be the last time that the exam will be given in its current format.

The ABC Technician Exam Committee feels that the assessment of skills and competencies would be more appropriately done through the experience technicians gain at their own workplace. As such, the committee is also looking to modify the exam eligibility criteria to institute a more formal structure requiring candidates for the technician exams to demonstrate the core skills and competencies needed to obtain the Certified Technician credential.
The American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, Inc.
330 John Carlyle Street, Suite 210
Alexandria, VA 22314-5760
Phone: 703.836.7114
Fax: 703.836.0838
www.abcop.org

Calendar of Events

November 2010
15th–20th: Certification Written and Written Simulation Exams
18th–21st: Pedorthic Footwear Association North American Congress, Orlando

December 2010
1st: Application Deadline—February Exams
10th–11th: Orthotic Clinical Patient Management Exam, Dallas

January 2011
7th–8th: Prosthetic Clinical Patient Management Exam, Dallas

February 2011
14th–19th: Certification Written and Written Simulation Exams

March 2011
1st: Application Deadline—May Exams
16th–19th: American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists Annual Meeting and Scientific Symposium, Orlando

May 2011
9th–14th: Certification Written and Written Simulation Exams

June 2011
1st: Application Deadline—August Exams

August 2011
8th–13th: Certification Written and Written Simulation Exams

September 2011
1st: Application Deadline—November Exams

November 2011
14th–19th: Certification Written and Written Simulation Exams

For further information on these events, please visit www.abcop.org or contact us at 703-836-7114.

ABC Participates in ACA National Conference

ABC was pleased once again to participate in the Amputee Coalition of America’s (ACA) National Conference held August 25-28 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Irvine, Calif.

At the event, ABC announced the launch of its newly redesigned consumer website, www.oandpcare.org. The redesign was initiated to provide consumers with valuable information about the orthotic, prosthetic, and pedorthic professions, including helpful tips on how to choose a care provider and what to expect during the process of working with an O,P&P professional. The website also provides a more user-friendly interface, detailed directory for care providers and facilities, and a new contemporary look and feel.

The annual ACA conference works to bring together people with limb loss and limb difference, their families and healthcare professionals to educate, support, and network among hundreds of attendees. This year’s exhibitors showcased the latest innovations in prosthetic devices and medical equipment and many professionals were on hand to give presentations and answer questions. The theme for 2010, “Power of One, Community of Many,” highlighted a true sense of support and empowerment for the amputee community.