



May 11, 2011

Face to Face: Robert Dodson, CPO, LPO

Robert Dodson, clinical manager at Advanced Arm Dynamics Southwest Center of Excellence, Dallas, Texas, hones his skills by working with patients with upper-limb amputations—a good many of whom are veterans who were injured in the line of duty. Dodson says he is honored to work with the soldiers and their families who have sacrificed so much for the rest of us. They inspire him "because most of these patients look at their loss not as a life-altering tragedy but...as an inconvenience that they will overcome," he says. "These patients possess intensity and a drive that is contagious and pushes all of us to do better, to be better." Dodson says this challenges him and keeps him motivated to continue learning and trying new things—all for a job that he loves.



1. How did you become interested in O&P?

I found the O&P program at the University of Texas (UT) Southwestern, Dallas, while researching graduate school options and immediately began to research this amazing profession. I spent time observing in a local facility and realized that I had found my calling in life. I couldn't believe that in O&P you would get to see patients clinically, play mad scientist in the lab, and produce something that could potentially change someone's life.

2. Who or what has motivated or inspired you in your professional pursuits?

Every step along the way I can pinpoint a specific mentor who taught me invaluable lessons, many of whom I still depend upon.

However, as cliché as it may sound, my patients are my true mentors; they teach me each and every day. The biggest lessons I have learned come from my day-to-day pursuit of excellent patient care, and in that quest comes learning from the many successes and mistakes made along the way.

3. How has your career progressed?

My career probably mirrors most—school, residency, first job, better job, and finally a better definition of what or where I want to focus. I have had amazing opportunities to work and interact with some of the finest practitioners in the world, and I am very thankful for my place in our profession. One of the highlights for me is the opportunity I have to educate others about our field including students, therapists, and physicians.

4. What emerging trends or exciting advances do you see for the O&P profession?

During my residency, my clinical director would not give a patient his or her new lower-limb prosthesis at the delivery appointment, but instead would hand the new device to the physical therapist, so the patient's fitting appointment would coincide with the patient's first day of gait training.

Much more of this type of collaboration is taking place between professionals in O&P and other medical professionals to achieve successful outcomes for our patients. I also see that in the coming years there will be a quantum leap in how patients control a prosthesis or how a device is suspended to their residual limb. With the continual advancements in technology, I think that new techniques for socket creation, component selection, and the overall design of the prosthesis will emerge and become commonplace.

5. Please describe your approach to patient care.

Listen, listen, listen. And when you finish listening, listen some more. We all believe that we know what is best for a patient, but when we listen to what he or she wants or wants to accomplish, what we believe is best may actually be opposite to what he or she needs. My goal is to be an advisor, an advocate, and a problem solver. Good patient care comes in the form of defining and fulfilling reasonable expectations.