



香港義肢矯形師學會

Hong Kong Society of Certified Prosthetist-Orthotists

Chairman of Panel on Health Service
Legislative Council
Hong Kong SAR of PRC

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Dear Mr. Chairman,

Statutory Regulation of Prosthetists and Orthotists in HKSAR

Prosthetist and Orthotist are two professions. Some practitioners hold dual qualifications and practice in both prosthetics and orthotics. These practitioners are called prosthetist-orthotists. The Hong Kong Society of Certified Prosthetist-Orthotists (HKSCPO) offers memberships to Prosthetist, Orthotist and Prosthetist-Orthotists. However, majority of our members are Prosthetist-Orthotists.

The HKSCPO has started to communicate with the local government for the statutory regulation of Prosthetists and Orthotists since 1995. The reply from the Health & Welfare Bureau dated 28th April 1999 indicated that the Hospital Authority had monitored and controlled the quality of prosthetics and orthotics (P&O) services by means of an in-house mechanism, and the non-statutory mechanisms offered by the Hong Kong Society of Certified Prosthetist-Orthotists had also helped to ensure the professional standards of the overwhelming majority of all Prosthetists and Orthotists in Hong Kong. Obviously the answer could not address the need of Hong Kong. It is urgently needed to set up statutory regulation of Prosthetists and Orthotists to protect the public interest.

More and more Prosthetists and Orthotists entered into the private sector in the past few years. The number of P&O service providers is about 90 and 30 in the public and private sectors respectively. This has not included service providers with unknown or ambiguous qualifications. There is no doubt that we cannot solely depend on the Hospital Authority. Moreover, we also need an independent and objective body to regulate the Prosthetists and Orthotists working within the Hospital Authority.

The prosthetists and orthotists provide direct care to patients with physical disablements. With the advancements in health technology, state-of-the-art materials, components and control strategies are

being applied in the design of prostheses (artificial limb) and orthoses (augmentative device). More objective assessment methods, evaluation and monitoring systems have also been introduced. The selection, prescription and operation of appropriate prosthetics or orthotics assessment and treatment procedures require highly specialized professional knowledge and skills. Otherwise, the healing or rehabilitation process will be delayed or failed. Moreover, recipients of P&O services are frequently in a vulnerable state, both physically and psychologically, that can contribute to the risk of harm.

In the provision of prosthetics and orthotics services, external forces or other kinds of stimulation such as electrical current is used or applied to the body. Improperly designed prosthesis or orthosis can affect circulation, induce secondary deformities, and caused chronic problems, putting the patients at risk. In lower limb prosthetic cases, failure of the prosthesis could immediately endanger an amputee in very susceptible situations, for instance, when he or she crosses a road with heavy traffic or climb up or down stairs. A similar situation is applied to a patient who requires a lower limb orthosis to stabilize the lower limb for walking.

In the United Kingdom, Canada, Korea, Japan and some states in the USA, registration or certification are required for practice as Prosthetists and Orthotists. A responsible government should not wait until there is occurrence of malpractice cases which are at an unacceptable level of risk to the patients. Our local government should take a proactive and pragmatic role to regulate the prosthetist and orthotist professions and prevent the delivery of below-standard services which are harmful to the public.

The HKSCPO recommend the Prosthetists and Orthotists professions to be governed by a board under the current Supplementary Medical Profession Ordinance.

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Chairman
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