



## Why Be Certified?

**A Messagee from  
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For Certification**

Certification offers the individual definite, tangible and intangible advantages. The possessor of a certificate as prosthetist or orthotist has proven that he has undergone a certain period of training, and that he has passed certain examinations held by the Board for certification. These indicate that he is no longer an apprentice, but that he has reached maturity and become a journeyman. He can exhibit this certificate with some pride.

But what is its true significance? What does it mean in terms of an individual's accomplishments? What is its portent for his future?—Certification appraises the world that its possessor has demonstrated the necessary knowledge and ability for the fabrication and fitting of braces or artificial limbs. It is evidence that he possesses certain skills as a machinist and engineer. It announces his having been exposed to, and absorbed, the fundamentals of anatomy, kinesiology, physiology, psychology, and metallurgy. It implies that he has grasped the essentials of the economic practices incident to his vocation. It advertises his character and integrity, and that he is respected locally and professionally. He has assimilated the ethics which will govern his future conduct with co-workers, medical personnel, and patients. It assuredly implies his ability and willingness to cooperate with technicians from other facilities, in the advancement of knowledge and the standards and techniques of his profession.

All this study, all this perspiration, all this effort, leads ultimately to a single goal shared by you, by the medical personnel, and the families of the afflicted; namely fabrication of better appliances for the service of the patient.

What selfish ends has the prosthetist attained? He has become a member of a national group of craftsmen who can justifiably take pride in their work. From this he will derive a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. He has earned the confidence of the doctors and the public. He can anticipate reference of work to him by doctors, clinics, and certified individuals. It can be presumed that a patient moving to a new community will be referred to a certified, rather than an uncertified shop or individual by his doctor or prosthetist.

I am informed that in some states appreciation of the significance of certification by your profession and mine, and beginning awareness of

its implication on the part of the public, has already resulted in the practical necessity of certification. This is a salubrious condition. We may predict its spread as the education of doctors and the public increases their cognizance of the value of certification to them.

We have enumerated some of the advantages of certification. What are its obligations?

What is the purpose of certification? As stated by the American Board for Certification, the purpose is "to establish standards for those engaged in the fitting of prosthetic or orthopedic appliances, particularly with respect to the adequacy 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."

This states a worthy project. When the Board was established seven years ago under the auspices of the OALMA it constituted an adequate objective. It was a start toward self discipline in an unpoliced field. Society has long recognized the necessity for such group discipline. Taboos, which have the force of laws, are found among the most primitive peoples. Our entire system of civil and criminal law has grown from such necessity.

But we must now go further. "To establish standards" lacks any implication of progress once these are fixed. I think we all agree that the true objective is not the establishment of, but *raising* the standards of our practice, and through the furtherance of knowledge and technology increasing our service to the handicapped individual. How is this to be realized? It can only be done by the application of new techniques in metallurgy, engineering, and medicine to the field of orthopaedic appliances, and by providing the student instruction in the basic sciences related to his field. The individual shop cannot do this. It must be accomplished through adequate educational opportunities. Higher standards of practice in diverse professional fields have been obtained by such means. The architects have their AIA, engineers their professional societies, doctors their Specialty Boards.

Countrywide criticism has been voiced that schooling in the things for which the ABC stands, and which the OALMA likewise professes, is unavailable for most apprentices. A great need exists here which must be satisfied. In the Los Angeles area the ABC and OALMA have instituted and fostered the first organized effort to remedy this obviously unacceptable situation.

I refer to the Wednesday night school sponsored by the local chapter of the OALMA now completing its fifth year, which has recently attained the dignity of becoming an Extension Course at the University of California, Los Angeles. Those among you who have participated in this activity, and particularly those of you who have guided its efforts, can feel justly proud of having initiated the forerunner of what I feel sure must develop into a system of nationwide schools for prosthetists and orthotists. The furthering of this school, and its development into a formal course of study over a period of two or three years as at the University of California, Los Angeles, I urge upon you.

Having attained certification, your work is not yet done. It is incumbent upon you, as members of a guild, to implement this effort toward the better education and training of those who follow in your footsteps. It is your privilege and duty, through the ABC and OALMA, to assist in setting up schools of similar character in other metropolitan areas. Thus will the standards of your profession advance to new heights, and service to the handicapped individual be augmented.