

A personal experience

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Abstract

David Bailey, who is 14 years old, has a left transverse total forearm deficiency and bilateral longitudinal femur partial deficiencies. The latter fall into Torode and Gillespie's Group I, with marked femoral shortening. A wedge osteotomy was performed for his gross right coxa vara, which was successful, but an intractable fixed flexion deformity of the right knee led eventually to a knee disarticulation being performed.

My experience

I have been wearing artificial limbs for 12½ years. First I wore an arm where I put the stump of my left arm in a socket and it was strapped on over my right shoulder. (My right arm is in full working order, in other words normal). It was so long ago since I first wore one, but I looked at cine films the other night and I think I must have really enjoyed having one. I had the arm when I was 18 months old and then artificial legs at about 2½ years old. They were the type of legs which were like pylons, these were the only legs which were a pain. I had to put my own legs into big heavy leather sockets which my Mum had to tie up of course because I cannot tie laces, but these, I suppose were the first step in the right direction. Later I had legs where the front bit was hinged and I slid my legs in and they were strapped up with velcro. These legs were very different. I could walk better because they were much lighter.

After this the legs did not change for a few years but my artificial arm changed. I got an electric arm instead of a hook. This looked more real and could open and close when I flexed my stomach on which I had a belt which activated the arm. I got to like the fitters and found new friends in the waiting room of all places.

When I was 7 years old I had an operation to put a metal plate in my right hip because there was something wrong. They called it by its technical name which had about 20 syllables. After the operation I wore plaster of Paris like a suit. It went from level with my arm-pit to the tip of my right leg but on the left side it stopped at my hip level.

I got over this quite fast but after the operation my knee stiffened up and my right leg was nearly at a right angle. This unforeseen difficulty meant that my left leg was fine but they had to remake my right artificial leg with a hole in the back where the bottom half of my own leg stuck out. This made it difficult to walk and in winter it was cold. After two years of this, when I was 9, I was asked if I minded if my leg was amputated from the knee down. I agreed to this because I knew that I would have a much better leg and it would probably improve my walking. I had it done and my improvement was good.

I had full movement of my stump and it felt fine. My right prosthesis changed to a much more complicated one. It had a carbon fibre pole up the middle of the lower half and a locking knee. My stump was in a socket at the top and coming from the socket was a belt which I strapped round my waist to keep it on. The left leg stayed the same. My legs are like this now.

I do not wear an arm any more. I went through a change of myoelectric arm when I had my leg off but then stopped completely. I wore a normal hook or stiff hand arm on and off but now I do not wear one at all and I doubt I ever will.

Artificial limbs changed my life from just hopping about on the floor to walking and looking more normal. I am eternally grateful to all the fitters, the doctors and all the others for the past 12½ years and especially my family for putting up with me.