

NOTES AND NEWS

PORTLAND INTRA-VA COURSE IN PROSTHETICS

The Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service of the Department of Medicine and Surgery, Veterans Administration, conducted the third in a series of Intra-VA training courses in prosthetics from April 29 through May 3, 1968, at Portland, Oregon. Emphasis was placed on immediate postsurgical prosthetics.

The course which was attended by 35 VA physicians, therapists, prosthetic representatives, and orthopedic shop technicians included laboratory sessions held at the VA Hospital in Portland.

The course was also attended by 11 prosthetists and therapists from non-VA organizations.

ZWORYKIN RECEIVES NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING AWARD

Vladimir K. Zworykin, awarded The National Academy of Engineering Third Founders Medal, is noted for his invention of the first practical picture transmission tube. Among his many other electronic inventions in the fields of engineering and medicine, Dr. Zworykin is remembered by many as a pioneer in the development of reading aids for the blind. He developed a device consisting of a hand-held probe or stylus based in part on the optophone invented by Dr. E. E. Fournier d'Albe in 1914. Dr. Zworykin's reading device produced audible sounds whose tone patterns depended on the shapes of the letters as the probe or stylus scanned them. Our present day small optophones, Visotoners and Visotactors, are direct descendants of the Fournier d'Albe and Zworykin devices.

BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING SEMINAR AT U. OF MIAMI

A seminar was held at the University of Miami on Biomedical Engineering on March 28, 1968. The seminar was attended by many orthopedic surgeons as well as biomedical engineers.

Dr. Murphy of the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service of the Veterans Administration lectured at the seminar on "Future Possibilities for Electro-Mechanical Limb Prostheses."

CPRD FIFTH WORKSHOP PANEL ON LOWER-EXTREMITY ORTHOTICS

The meeting of the Fifth Workshop Panel on Lower-Extremity Orthotics was held in Atlanta, Georgia, April 3-4, 1968. Anthony Staros, Director of the Veterans Administration Prosthetics Center was chairman, and A. B. Wilson, Jr., of the Committee on Prosthetics Research and Development and H. Thranhardt of J. E. Hanger, Inc. were co-chairmen of Group A & B discussions, respectively.

The meeting was opened with an introduction by Mr. Staros and followed with a report of the "Workshop on the Human Foot and Ankle, Design and Development Implications." Group A, chaired by Mr. Wilson, discussed "Orthopedic Disability Analysis and Development of Criteria for Lower Extremity Brace System Design"; group B, chaired by Mr. Thranhardt, covered "Brace Structures, Materials and Special Devices."

Before adjourning the meeting, a session was spent on new items with presentations by Mr. Rosenquist of the Pope Brace Company, Professor Radcliffe of the University of California at Berkeley, Mr. McIlmurray of the VA Prosthetics Center and many others.

The following lists those who took part in Group A and B discussions:

GROUP A

F. A. Clippinger, Durham, N.C.
 H. Elftman, New York, N.Y.
 C. Fryer, Chicago, Ill.
 H. A. Mauch, Dayton, Ohio
 C. A. McLaurin, Toronto, Ont.
 Can.
 E. F. Murphy, New York, N.Y.
 E. Peizer, New York, N.Y.
 C. Radcliffe, San Francisco, Calif.
 W. Roth, Burlington, Vt.
 A. Sarmiento, Miami, Fla.
 A. W. Serkiz, Columbus, Ohio
 C. Scott, Los Angeles, Calif.
 R. Snelson, Los Angeles, Calif.
 J. E. Traub, Washington, D.C.
 R. Wirta, Philadelphia, Pa.

GROUP B

J. Campbell, San Francisco, Calif.
 T. Engen, Houston, Texas
 R. Lehneis, New York, N.Y.
 F. Harmon, Atlanta, Ga.
 B. Ewing, Atlanta, Ga.
 C. Fillauer, Chattanooga, Tenn.
 W. McIlmurray, New York, N.Y.
 C. Rosenquist, Columbus, Ohio
 B. Titus, Durham, N.C.

WALKING WITH A CAST

Getting the patient out of bed and walking as soon as possible after surgery is a popular trend with many surgeons today. With the introduction of immediate postsurgical prosthetics fitting another step was accomplished in this concept, and surgeons are beginning to look for other possible applications.

One recent development tried by Orthopedic Surgeon Ernst Dehne of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Memphis is "walking on a broken leg." Dr. Dehne concluded that a patient should not have to stay in a cast and flat on his back for weeks—instead, "let him start walking as soon as the cast is dry." A broad-scale test was carried out at the Army's Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver where 56 servicemen with open-tibial fractures were treated this way. Within 24 hours after setting the cast, Fitzsimons doctors had their patients on crutches encouraging them to put as much weight on their broken legs as they could tolerate.

The results proved promising. The average time in plaster was 19 weeks, but some got out in as little as seven weeks. Atrophy was kept to a minimum, all fractures healed, and there were no amputations.

"PROJECT SLIDES" COMPLETED

The Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service of the Veterans Administration has completed preparation of their second series of "Project Slides" dealing with prosthetic and orthotic devices and components. The sets, consisting of 100 updated slides and captions, include a section on immediate post-surgical prosthetics management.

The Veterans Administration has distributed the sets to 80 VA hospitals requesting that the slides be made available on a loan basis to responsible locally interested individuals and organizations.

Sets of slides and captions will also be distributed to every physical and occupational therapy school in the United States by the Committee on Prosthetic-Orthotic Education of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. In addition, sets are being sent to all prosthetics clinics with residency training programs.

The International Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled will also make sets available to selected people and organizations outside of the United States.

DR. MURPHY HONORED

Dr. Eugene F. Murphy, Chief, Research and Development Division, Prosthetic and Sensory Aids, was recently elected to the National Academy of Engineering. Election to the Academy is the highest professional distinction that can be conferred on an American engineer and is limited to those who have made "important contributions to engineering theory and practice" or who have demonstrated "unusual accomplishments in the pioneering of new and developing fields of technology."

Fifty engineers were elected this year, making a total membership of 237. Membership in the Academy entails participation in its principal activity: rendering advice to the Federal Government in important policy matters related to engineering.

We are proud of our Dr. Murphy for having achieved this honor.

STUDY OF 851 BLINDED VETERANS PUBLISHED BY AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND

The 338-page study recently published by the American Foundation for the Blind entitled "851 Blinded Veterans: A Success Story" was supported by the Foundation, the Veterans Administration, and the Blinded Veterans Association. It was carried out under the direction of the Foundation's research department, with Dr. Milton D. Graham serving as project director and Robert L. Robinson as research director.

The 851 are male veterans of World War I, World War II, and the Korean conflict. All have at least 70 percent visual loss. Through interviews and examinations which were conducted in 1964 in ten VA medical outpatient clinics in large metropolitan areas across the country, information was obtained about demographic, social, ophthalmological, audiological, psychological, and general health characteristics.

According to the study of 851 blinded veterans of the three wars, blind persons can achieve a place in the community generally comparable to that of their sighted peers if they receive adequate medical, social, and rehabilitation services.

Some of the general findings reported in the study are as follows:

Comparison of the study and United States census data reveals that the blinded veterans are in many ways similar to the general male population and/or the male veteran population: mean age is forty-six; they are generally heads of their households; most own their own homes and live with their wives in an average-sized family; the proportion of nonwhites to whites is similar.

VA social workers who interviewed the blinded veterans found them mostly positive in their handling of rehabilitation experience, family situations and relations with the community, and in their general pattern of family activities.

Ninety percent of the blinded veterans have been employed at one time or another since they left the military service, but only 38 percent were employed at the time of the study, with an additional 5 percent looking for work. In part, age accounts for the low percentage of employment (many are already of retirement age).

The average household income in the United States in 1964 was \$6,600; for the blinded veterans' household, it was \$8,600. Financial flooring, in the form of disability compensation, is one of the factors contributing to this difference in reported family household income.

The blinded veterans with residual vision showed a surprising lack of concern about eye care: half of the sample had not seen a doctor about their eyes in 5 years, and only about 25 percent had seen a doctor during the year immediately before the study.

During the analysis and writing phase of the project, the Veterans Administration was informed of the findings. The major information reported to the VA was that there was seriously inadequate eye care among the sample group and that many had multiple impairment and chronic health conditions.

Partially as a result of the findings, the Veterans Administration was prompted to make some significant changes in its program for blinded veterans. Among the changes were:

The VA appointed a consultant on blindness to work out of the office of the chief of Blind Rehabilitation Services in the VA Central Office. It is hoped that such a consultant will be located at each of the Veterans Administration Rehabilitation Centers.

Because the Blind Rehabilitation Center at Hines Veterans Hospital (Hines, Illinois) has a long waiting list, a second center was opened in 1967 at Palo Alto, California; a third is planned for West Haven, Connecticut.

The Veterans Administration has decided to make a concerted effort to seek out blinded veterans who need assistance of any type. (This contrasts with the former VA practice of taking a passive role in the provision of services.)

The report concludes by stating that "the story of the sample is largely a success story. Visually impaired and often multiply impaired by chance in the service of their country, they were offered in compensation many opportunities (personal rehabilitation, vocational and academic training, medical services, and so on), and they took advantage and used them well.

"Their record is a tribute to all concerned. It should be well studied by anyone who believes that man can triumph over impairment and handicap."

The book costs \$4.25 and may be obtained from the American Foundation for the Blind, 15 West 16th Street, New York, New York 10011.