

ISPO – INTERNATIONAL KEY TO THE FUTURE IN AIDING THE HANDICAPPED

Anthony Staros^a

Director

Veterans Administration Prosthetics Center

Veterans Administration

252 Seventh Avenue

New York, New York 10001

. . . . an editorial

Here in New York in this Spring of 1977 the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) reached a new height in its professional stature. I was fortunate to be identified with this significant happening which took place in the last few days of May and the first few of June.

The Second Congress of the International Society (the first having been in Montreux, Switzerland, 1974) was supported by hundreds of contributors from all over the world. Unusual in its size was the response when last year our Scientific Program Chairman, Sidney Fishman, Ph. D., Director of New York University School of Prosthetics and Orthotics, invited submissions of papers. The result revealed an almost overwhelming interest in participation; the Committee which organized the Congress, and on which I served as President, was extremely encouraged after some earlier dim days when we had worried about how popular our event would be.

We built our program around a core of invited speakers, asking them to treat the current state of the art and perhaps some recent history of technical change in prosthetics and orthotics. Professor Charles W. Radcliffe, well known for his studies in prosthetics at the Biomechanics Laboratory at UC-Berkeley, presented the First Knud Jansen Lecture on Above-Knee Prosthetics. The submitted papers, which came from all over the world, were extraordinary in providing directions for the future, for delineating the status of prosthetics in selected geographical areas, and for discussions of problems and solutions associated with different types of patients.

^aMember, Editorial Board, Bulletin of Prosthetics Research.

But this was not enough for the Congress Committee. From the very outset in our planning, we had felt that courses of instruction in specific areas of prosthetics and orthotics technologies would be needed to fully benefit the registrants; through these, explicit coverage of certain topics could be offered so that a participant could carry away with him or her something to be used *now* to benefit patients. With help particularly from A. Bennett Wilson of the Congress Committee as well as Dr. Fishman, we were able to organize an instructional course program the likes of which had never appeared before in any single event attended by professionals in prosthetics and orthotics. These instructional courses were extremely popular; the interest of Congress registrants was maintained during that whole week, and their comments were overwhelmingly positive (and some were ecstatic) about the Congress and particularly about the value of the courses.

But even this was not enough. We also offered symposia on various topics of special interest. In one we listened to the consumer, the user of prosthetic and orthotic services. There also was one in the very special area of orthopedic shoes, a subject usually bypassed by meetings devoted to prosthetics and orthotics.

But we wanted to offer even more by collecting an array of very good scientific and commercial exhibits. Both types were well received.

And still this was not all. Our video and film programs created a great deal of interest. These made additional instructional material available for the benefit of individual participants. Indeed, we were even able to give some private showings of special subjects, covered in our video library, that were of special interest to individuals.

But even all these educational efforts did not constitute our whole Congress package, for we were also able to organize a very excellent social program, which many people will long remember.

There were many aspects to this Congress, all of which needed coordination and management; we learned here about the advantages of professional management of such activities. We enjoyed the labors of such professionals, who eased our burden and made our Congress as successful as it was.

Over 1,000 registrants from about 40 countries participated; we were particularly pleased to see our colleagues from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in attendance.

We also took this Congress a bit beyond prosthetics and orthotics, as the terms are often understood, into related areas of technical aids, mobility systems, and vehicles for the handicapped. In this process we were able to provide forums for these technical areas which are so closely related to the scope of ISPO. The Congress

constituted an arena for ISPO to relate its interest to the correlated interests of the International Commission on Technical Aids of Rehabilitation International. We were able, through these contacts, to recognize that we are not infringing on technical territories, but working together to facilitate the life of the handicapped.

These, and the other business meetings which took place within and around the Congress, signaled that ISPO is now able to move forward assuming its natural role as the key international society in the field of aids for the handicapped, especially prosthetics and orthotics.

We who organized this Congress feel strongly that the lesson learned here in New York, about the advantages of instructional courses in such a convention of professionals, is of great practical value to those who plan national and international meetings of similar kinds. The positive reactions we received were overwhelming on this point.

We now note with satisfaction that the 1980 Congress will be held in Holland. Our new president is the distinguished Dr. George Murdoch of Scotland who succeeds Dr. Knud Jansen. To our Dutch colleagues we not only express well wishes in their planning, but we offer all the help we can in their efforts to organize a successful meeting.