The IPODES Project: Developing an International Prosthetic and Orthotic Diagnostic Exchange System

Dan Blocka
Faculty of Health Sciences, Prosthetics and Orthotics, George Brown College

Developing an International Prosthetic and Orthotic Diagnostic Exchange System (IPODES) represents the initiation of an applied research project that is investigating how best to meet the diagnostic information needs of prosthetic and orthotics (P&O) practitioners from around the world. Currently the P&O Programs at George Brown College provide an ad hoc networking among affiliated clinicians worldwide, including a network of graduates of the renowned program. However, there is no convenient way to engage these geographically dispersed practitioners within one communication forum. Further, professional networking and communication fulfills an important clinical purpose— to provide clinical advice, guidance and expertise to a distributed community of practice. This community of practice has a need of a way to share information and resources, as well as diagnostic images, clinical data and professional advice and mentoring. The goal of this project is to conduct the initial needs assessment for the creation of the IPODES system.

At present there is little understanding of the exact information needs of the prosthetic and orthotics P&O clinical community of practice. That is, besides a basic desire to use the internet to collaboratively assess diagnostic images, there are a host of unknowns that need uncovering. These include to what extent an online communication tool would be useful for clinical practices. If so, what kinds of information does it need to collect? Are there readily available off the shelf technologies that can be purchased that will fulfill some or all of the functions required? The needs assessment will inform the design and functional specifications of the IPODES project.

Benefits to GBC: GBC will benefit by using its position as a leader in the P&O fields to engage with practitioners and enhance its reputation through the creation of the Diagnostic Exchange System. Students in the P&O program will benefit from participating in the background research.

Benefits to Industry: The P&O community will benefit from a better understanding of their communication need and readily available technologies.