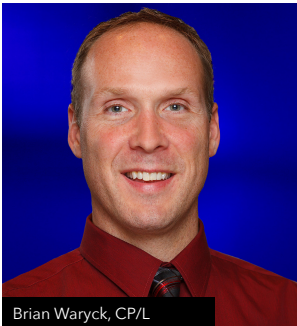


No Going Back: Experts Discuss Telemedicine in O&P

Experts discuss the benefits of telemedicine in O&P and how practices can take advantage of this technology. - by Jason Laday

Although telemedicine may be ideal for interviews and quick follow-up questions with patients, it cannot replace one-on-one evaluations with prosthetists and orthotists, which, at least for the time being, are necessary for detailed examinations.



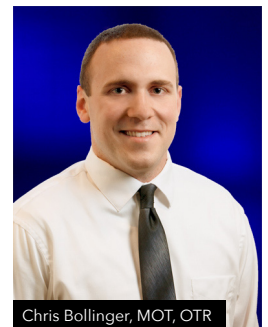
Brian Waryck, CP/L

For Brian Waryck, CP/L, and Chris Bollinger, MOT, OTR, a clinical manager and upper limb prosthetic therapy specialist, respectively, both from Advanced Arm Dynamics, telemedicine can only take practitioners and patients so far. At some stage, an in-person visit will be required, they said.

"A large part of what we do is physical evaluation," Waryck told O&P News. "You can do the preliminary interview and gather goals with patients from a distance, but when you are evaluating strength and range of motion, that has to be done in person. Palpating a residual limb, getting a sense of subsurface structures, anything that goes into consideration of prosthetic design, all has to be done in person."

Bollinger said in-person visits are also required to evaluate patients for potential prostheses.

"Getting a hands-on feel that may contraindicate a certain prosthesis is important," he said. "You cannot physically touch the patient with telemedicine."



Chris Bollinger, MOT, OTR

According to "The State of Telehealth," the biggest hurdle to using telemedicine faced by patients is the "digital divide," in which individuals who are older, live in rural areas, have lower incomes and are less educated are less likely to have internet access than their younger, urban, higher-income and more educated counterparts.

As such, those who need telemedicine the most may be the least likely to benefit from it.