

Read This Article, Take Survey to Earn Continuing Education Points

Pedorthic Footcare Association (PFA) now offers Continuing Education Points (CEPs), approved by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC) and the Board of Certification/Accreditation International (BOC), via specially designated articles within *Current Pedorthics* magazine.

To take advantage of the program, thoroughly read the adjacent article, "Pedorthic Utilization of Custom Molded Ankle Gauntlets," and then visit www.pedorthics.org and click on the Continuing Education Opportunities tab to purchase the 10-question quiz associated with this article. CEP quizzes cost \$25 for members and \$35 for non-members.

The quizzes are worth 1.0 Scientific or Business CEP, depending on the content.

Successful completion of the quiz will result in 1.0 CEP reported directly to ABC and BOC at the end of each quarter.

This article is the fourth CEP-eligible article in *Current Pedorthics*. Look for additional CEP-eligible articles in future issues of the magazine.

If you have any questions, contact Lauren Kemp, PFA education coordinator, at (800) 673-8447 or e-mail info@pedorthics.org.

CUSTOM MOLDED ANKLE GAUNTLETS HAVE PROVEN TO BE AN EFFECTIVE DEVICE FOR PEDORTHIC USE WHEN ADDRESSING A VARIETY OF INDICATIONS RELATING TO THE FOOT AND ANKLE. MANY CERTIFIED PEDORTHISTS HAVE BEEN HESITANT TO DISPENSE THESE CUSTOM PRODUCTS, THINKING THE GAUNTLET IS OUTSIDE THEIR SCOPE OF PRACTICE. OR PERHAPS THEY WERE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE CASTING PROCESS, OR FELT IT WASN'T WORTH THEIR TIME TO ADD A NEW CUSTOM DEVICE TO WHAT THEY ALREADY OFFER THEIR PATIENTS. IN THIS ARTICLE, I ADDRESS EACH AREA OF CONCERN IN A CLEAR MANNER TO ENCOURAGE C.PEDS. TO USE THEIR SCOPE OF PRACTICE IN ITS ENTIRETY.

Scope of Practice

The scope of practice for a certified pedorthist, as determined by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics (ABC), fully allows for the C.Ped. to dispense a custom molded ankle gauntlet since it falls within the description of a subtalar-control foot orthosis. The scope reads: "Pedorthic devices" means therapeutic shoes, shoe modifications made for therapeutic purposes, below the ankle partial foot prostheses, and foot orthoses. It also includes subtalar-control foot orthoses (SCFO) designed to manage the function of the anatomy by primarily controlling the range of motion of the subtalar joint.

There are two important factors that must be considered when utilizing a SCFO:

1. Proximal height of the orthosis; and
2. Patient's diagnosis.

When considering the proximal height issue, the ABC scope states: "Excluding footwear, the proximal height of a custom pedorthic device does not extend beyond the junction of the gastrocnemius and the Achilles tendon."

CUSTOM MOLDED ANKLE GAUNTLETS

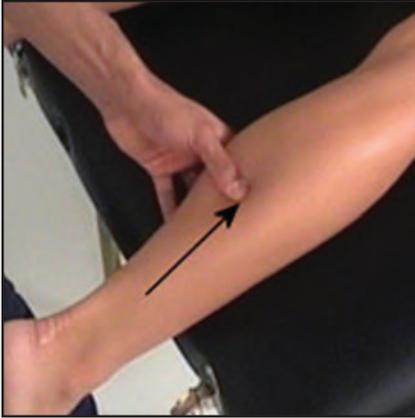


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 1 shows there is a considerable distance above the ankle, approximately 5 to 7 inches, depending on the patient's anatomy. A custom brace of that height can significantly control severe conditions of the foot and ankle.

Regarding the issue of the patient's diagnosis, the ABC scope states that the prescription for the device must address a medical condition that originates at the ankle or below. Medical conditions that originate at the ankle or below that are frequently seen by pedorthists include diagnoses of posterior tibial tendon dysfunction (PTTD), Charcot disease of the foot, degenerative joint disease (DJD), as well as foot and ankle trauma.

It should be noted that within the pedorthic scope of practice there is no mention of restrictions regarding the type of materials used or whether the device is of a solid ankle or articulated design. Therefore there are many possible variations for a subtalar-control foot orthosis.

This article focuses on leather gauntlet styles. These specific custom made gauntlet styles are fabricated with an inner plastic shell, foam-lined top to bottom and covered inside and out with quality leather (see Figure 2).

What is the difference between a SCFO and an AFO (ankle foot orthosis)? A custom made ankle gauntlet is a SCFO while at the same time it is also an AFO. Most in our profession, as well as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and insurance companies, are only familiar with AFO while addressing a below the knee orthosis. The SCFO terminology came into being many years ago when the pedorthic scope of practice was amended by the Board for Certification in Pedorthics (BCP). Even though a SCFO is in essence an AFO, there were no AFO-related questions on the C.Ped. exam nor were the pedorthic schools required to include content in their courses regarding an AFO. With the

prevalence of patients that C.Peds. were encountering that would benefit from a brace that went above the ankle, BCP saw the need to expand the scope for pedorthists to include a SCFO with specific limitations for height and diagnosis.

The Casting Process

There are several ways ways of obtaining a negative cast of a patient's foot. For the majority of pedorthists, the only cast they have taken is for custom made footwear or custom foot orthoses. Many lack experience taking a cast for a device that goes above the ankle as well as knowing how to position the foot and ankle to achieve the optimal fit of the device once it is fabricated.

Another factor involving custom made ankle gauntlets is that the vast majority are fabricated by central fabrication facilities; much like custom footwear. This means that accuracy of the cast, delineation of problem areas and clear communication of what you need for your patient are all highly important (see Figure 3).

I have dispensed many custom leather gauntlets and have evaluated many thousands of casts sent to the central fabrication facility where I work.

In my experience, the best casts are a result of the patient being seated, semi-weight bearing and with hip, knee and ankle all positioned at 90 degree angles whenever possible. You then need to hold the ankle and forefoot in as much of a corrected position as the patient finds comfortable. The cast must be circumferential in nature and have a proximal height a minimum of 1 inch higher than you want the orthosis fabricated.

Ideally, the patient's foot should be placed on a contoured footboard that simulates the heel height of most orthopedic footwear. Once placed inside a shoe, the custom leather gauntlet should position the ankle at a 90 degree angle to the floor. This position has proven to provide improved function

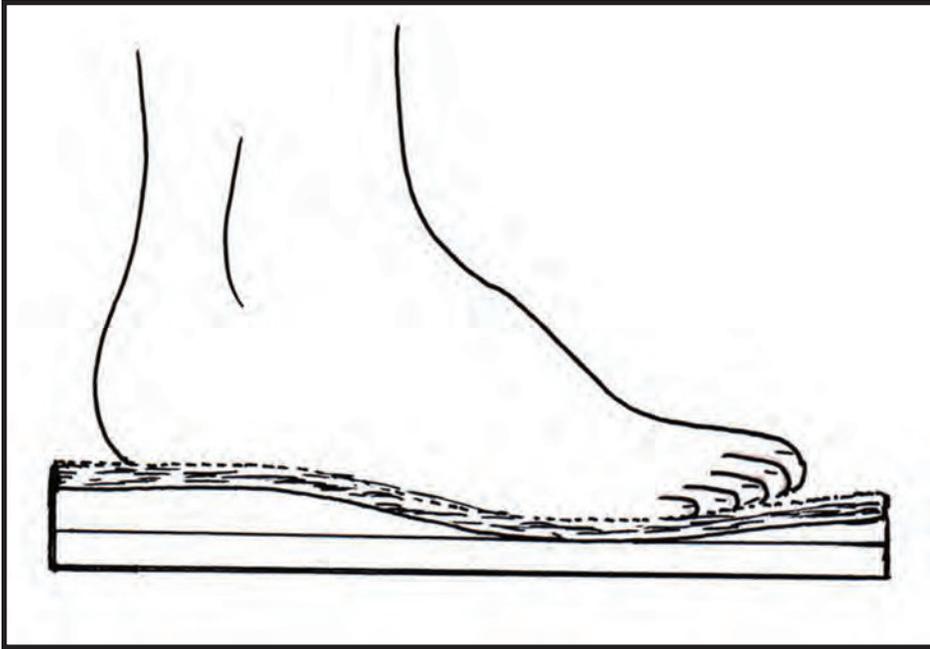


Figure 4

As C.Peds., we need to utilize the entirety of our scope of practice. Custom made ankle gauntlets help many thousands of patients find relief from pain and assist in keeping them mobile.

and comfort for the patient while wearing the device (see Figure 4).

There are a variety of casting materials that work well for obtaining a negative cast of your patient. You may use plaster bandage, fiberglass tape or a casting sock such as the STS Company molding sock. All work very well when used properly; none provide a better result than the other. Use the method that works best for you and the one with which you are most comfortable.

It's Well Worth Your Time

In today's business climate, I am certain you are interested in finding any additional revenue stream available. By providing custom made ankle gauntlets

you not only fully utilize your scope of practice, but offer additional options for your patients who suffer from a variety of ailments. That makes you an even more valuable resource to your referral sources, and you may also find a great source of additional income for your business.

A Regional Example

In December 2008, the Pricing, Data Analysis, and Coding contractor (PDAC) reviewed the Arizona AFO line of products and determined the appropriate HCPCS codes to be used when billing for those items.

For both the Arizona Standard and Tall AFO (which fall within the C.Ped. scope

of practice) the following codes should be used:

- L1940 Ankle foot orthosis, plastic or other material, custom fabricated;
- L2330 Addition to lower extremity, lacer molded to patient model, for custom fabricated orthosis only; and
- L2820 Addition to lower extremity, soft interface for molded plastic below knee section.

To help clarify, the L1940 refers to the plastic inner shell (the AFO portion), the L2330 refers to the leather gauntlet covering the plastic shell and the L2820 refers to the foam lining that is between the plastic inner shell and the inside leather lining. All three of these codes are to be used when billing for each orthosis.

Reimbursement amounts in the United States do vary from region to region. Reimbursement from Medicare for those three codes will total anywhere from \$823 to \$1,096.

Conclusion

As C.Peds., we need to utilize the entirety of our scope of practice. Custom made ankle gauntlets help many thousands of patients find relief from pain and assist in keeping them mobile. It is well worth the time and effort to consider using custom gauntlets. You will help your patients, be a more valuable resource to your referral sources and find a profitable venture for your business.

Helpful websites include www.arizonaafo.com, www.abcop.org and www.dmepdac.com. ■



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