

Natalie Mecklenburg

Ms. Smith

Internship 4B

13 December 2024

Brian Wiggen Transcript

Natalie Mecklenburg: What is your current job title?

Brian Wiggen: Practitioner. Branch Manager. Dual board certified orthotist, certified prosthetist.

N: What is your favorite aspect of your career?

B: The challenge and reward of being able to use my skills to help others regain mobility and reach their goals. That is at the top of the list but there are many other things I love about O&P as well. Creating and building custom designed braces and limbs as well as the interaction with patients and families.

N: What is your least favorite aspect of your career?

B: Paper work. The sheer amount of documentation, compliance, and dealing with insurance companies is taking more and more time away from patient care.

N: What degree did you pursue in college? What further education, if any, do you have?

B: I started in mechanical engineering, then went to pre-med. I started in O&P in 1990 and worked full time in O&P while in college and became board certified in 1995. I opted to stay in O&P instead of taking the MCAT and pursuing med school. Never looked back.

N: What first got you interested in this career field?

B: I answered an ad in the newspaper looking for a technician to do design and fabrication. I always loved building cool stuff and this seemed like a great opportunity to help people and do what I do I love, and get paid for it.

N: How has the prosthetic industry changed since you started working in it? How do you stay updated with all these advancements?

B: The answer to the first question is really a two part answer. The first is the sear speed of technology, the advancement of materials and how those technologies are applied in our field. I can remember building braces out of metal and leather, sockets out of fiberglass, and now we have advanced plastics, 3D printing, and carbon composites. Instead of plaster molds and sculpting, we now have digital scanning and CAD/CAM technologies. The other aspect of how this industry has changed is the increase in compliance and documentation that is required to deal with third party

payers. As in the whole of the medical industry the amount of paperwork has increased a hundredfold. The way we stay up to date with all the advancement is to stay informed. The O&P industry has several really good publications along with many articles and white papers that are available on the internet. The other is clinical symposiums and scientific conferences that we attend. Certified practitioners are required to keep up with continuing education credits, so always learning is part of the career path.

N: What is the biggest piece of advice you would give to someone interested in a career in prosthetics?

B: Always be willing to think outside the box to find solutions that will improve someone's life and abilities. You may not always get paid to go above and beyond, but helping someone be able to reach their goals is worth every bit of effort. Be prepared to take on all the aspects of the administrative side of the job by expanding your knowledge and education to include medical billing and insurance navigation. Sometimes this an overlooked aspect of O&P that is minimally taught in schools.