Prosthetists and the People with Amputations

As is the case with all healthcare providers, all prosthetists are not created equal. The nuances present in all professions are also present with prosthetics. The following background information should be helpful when working with prosthetists and the injured workers they specialize in treating.

Basic Definitions

- **Residual Limb(s):** The part(s) that is left after an amputation(s). (Not to be referred to as a "stump," if you please!)
- **Prosthesis:** One single artificial limb, hand/foot or digit.
- **Prostheses:** Two or more artificial limbs, hands/feet or digits.
- **Prosthetic:** Of or relating to an artificial hand/foot or digit. (e.g. “Soon she will have a prosthetic hand” not “Soon she will have a prosthetic.”)
- **Prosthetics:** The profession associated with providing clinical services that include provision of prosthetic devices.
- **Temporary or preparatory prosthesis:** Usually the first device an amputee receives. It serves many purposes including
  - Train the wearer to how to operate and maintain the device
  - Ensure the wearer can don and doff the device independently
  - Facilitate rehabilitation

- **Definitive Prosthesis:** The prosthesis fit after primary healing has occurred and the residual limb volume has stabilized. Some facilities now go straight to the definitive prosthetic fitting as the first prosthesis and then offer a prosthetic socket replacement to accommodate residual limb changes after surgery.

Information to Obtain from Practitioners and their Practices

*What are their credentials?*
- State Licensed (15 states currently)
  - Only practitioners need to be licensed by the states which have licensure. Facilities are not state licensed.
- Nationally Certified (ABC vs. BOC)
  - Practitioners need to be certified if they practice in a state without licensure. Facilities should be certified whether...
they are in a licensed state or not. There are two main certifying bodies in the U.S. for Prosthetic Services.
  - American Board for Certification in Prosthetics, Orthotics and Pedorthics
  - Board for Certification/Accreditation International

What is the experience of treating practitioner?
  - Number of years in the profession
  - Experience with specific patient populations (upper limb, lower limb, multi-trauma, veterans)

Will the practitioner who is delivering the services be the one also providing follow up services?

Do they provide ongoing measurement of outcomes to assess treatment effectiveness and if so, what surveys or tools are they using?

Peer counseling offered?
  - Many facilities are aligned with amputee support groups who have trained peer counselors. Is this a service available through this facility

Timeline for Services
  - How long does it generally take to provide a prosthesis?
  - What is the usual schedule for follow-up care? (For a someone with a fresh amputation, it should be weekly after delivery of their first prosthesis then further spaced)

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