

Dialog

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Summer 2013

Back to Work

Joe takes on every obstacle

Full Speed Ahead

Ryan, 6, is unstoppable

Insurance Appeals

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Joe

Joe leveraged social media to fight for the right prosthetic that would allow him to return to his job as a paramedic.



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Rejected!?

You've been denied for the medical device you and your prosthetist believe is right for you. Learn 8 simple steps to improve your chance of appeal success.

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Ryan

Ryan's family has a hard time keeping up with this energetic 6-year-old and his mission to take on life at full speed.



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ottobockus.com

Same URL, new consumer friendly look. Ottobockus.com offers people new to prosthetics and those looking for the latest technology an easy to navigate and helpful resource.

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Sports

As the weather warms up, finding an adaptive sporting event near you is easier than ever with three helpful resources.



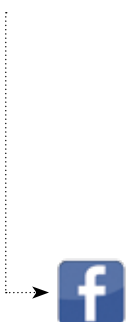
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Byron

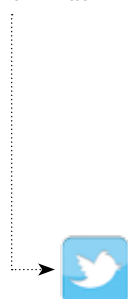
Byron's career journey started in college with chemistry classes and thoughts of teaching but a conversation with a career counselor changed his life forever.

Get Social with Us!

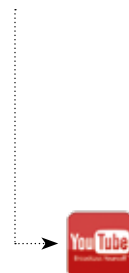
Looking for community? Connect, comment and Like us on Facebook.



Want quick bites of info from the Ottobock world? Follow us on Twitter.



Watch people living with mobility challenges demonstrating Ottobock products and sharing their stories. Subscribe to our YouTube channel.



Meet the bloggers! Momentum, the Ottobock blog, features people like you doing interesting things and accomplishing the personal and professional goals they have set for themselves.



Welcome to Dialog magazine.

I've been in this business a long time, starting first as a practitioner in a prosthetic practice, then as a med-tech entrepreneur, and now working to guide Ottobock into the future. Through all the changes I've seen in the medical field, I've noticed that one thing has always remained front and center: People – and their stories.

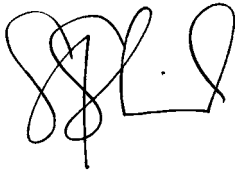
That's why I'm particularly excited to bring you this first issue of Dialog magazine.

Dialog is just that – an exchange of ideas and stories between people, both inside and outside of the Ottobock family. Stories about people who use Ottobock products, such as Joe, an emergency medical technician who, through his own advocacy, went on to change reimbursement policy with his insurer – paving the way for others to also be fit with life-changing medical technology.

We also celebrate a story about Ryan, an active young boy who uses our Skippi and Kimba wheelchairs. And we feature one of our many in-house practitioners – Byron Backus, CP – whose deep experience and dedication to successful outcomes have helped make Ottobock what I like to think of as the best mobility company anywhere, with the strongest educational resources.

I am also proud to announce our newly revamped website: www.ottobockus.com. It's filled with stories, video, and helpful information – including useful "what you need to know" material, if you or a loved one is new to prosthetics, orthotics, or mobility.

I hope you enjoy both our new publication and our new website. They're all about people – putting them front and center in all we do.



Scott Schneider

North American Regional President
and Chief Marketing Officer



DIALOG is about people who go the extra mile and act as a source of inspiration to others. Perfectly ordinary people who often have a special ability, idea or characteristic. We also share information about companies or ideas that may make your life easier.

Do you know someone who would enjoy receiving Dialog? They can sign up at www.ottobockus.com/StayInTouch

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Paramedic gets back in the driver's seat

After his above-knee amputation Joe worked with his entire care team – and the readers of his blog – to return to the level of function he needed as a paramedic.



Joe is a paramedic in a busy EMS service in the Louisville, Kentucky, metro area. He's seen everything from four-wheeler accidents and multiple shootings...to his own 110 foot fall. That last one was the bad luck that caused him to lose his leg – and almost lose his ability to get back to work.

He was out for a hike with his partner (an Iraq war veteran and also a paramedic) along with her son, and took a wrong turn off the path near the Tioga Falls waterfall just south of Louisville. After a few steps Joe hit slick ground and started sliding – until he slid right off the edge above the waterfall and landed 110 feet below in the river bed.

“If it's something you need to move on with your life, to have a more full life, then you need to fight for that, you need to push for it.”

He knew it was bad when they had to airlift him out. And operate on his shattered leg.

“I could have kept my leg, had it fused, went ahead and gotten a desk job somewhere, but EMS is in my blood. That's who I am. I can't imagine doing another job,” says Joe about the decision to amputate.

Joe had some specific needs when he started to research prosthetic systems, because in order to go forward and take the rigorous physical test, he had to first be able to take a step backwards – literally.

Walking backwards – as well as overcoming obstacles – is critical for handling a gurney and to bring it in and out of ambulances and ERs. It's also the movement that the Genium prosthetic system lets him do confidently – and safely.

Discovering the right system was just the beginning of his fitting process, however. Joe had a tough battle with his insurer to get coverage, which didn't pay for any microprocessor-controlled knee joint systems.

Fortunately, Joe had been blogging about his accident and lack of coverage and his cause was picked up by a firefighters' association in New York. They started an email campaign that helped change the insurer's decision – and not just for Joe, but for other amputees that followed.

After being fit with the Genium by his prosthetists (Sienna Miller and Matt Hayden at Kentucky Prosthetics and Orthotics), Joe needed to get busy with his arduous recovery. He found out how important it was to be conscientious about his physical therapy and work with the right therapist. Lucky for him he was introduced to physical therapist Hilbert Potter, who also wears the Genium knee.

“Finding out about Hilbert and knowing that he's an above-knee amputee as well, and having someone who's been through the process, who's been there, who knows the obstacles you face as an amputee, is really important,” says Joe. “Hilbert knows what needs to be done, how to target the things that need to be targeted to get me back to work quicker than someone who is ‘quote-unquote’ able bodied.”

Even with the right support, it took a lot of dedication to get back the mobility he needed to work as a paramedic. But all his hard work finally paid off when Joe recently got a fulltime job as a paramedic – just in time, too, since he and his partner just welcomed their first baby to the world.

Rejected!?

8 steps you must take to improve your chances of appeal success



There may be times when the right medical device for you is denied. First find out if your insurance company will allow your practitioner to appeal on your behalf. If not, and you must do it yourself, then these eight steps will help guide you through the process.

- 1 If you don't receive instructions on how to appeal a decision, contact your insurance provider as soon as possible to avoid missing deadlines.
- 2 Request copies of your medical records (from your prosthetist, physicians, therapists, rehabilitation facility, hospital, home health, etc.) to support your case.
- 3 Take time to understand your insurance plan and payment options.
- 4 Follow the instructions provided with your Explanation of Benefits (EOB).
- 5 Draft your appeal letter to your insurance company.
 - a. Restate the reason why the claim was denied.
 - b. Quote their policy and why you disagree (if applicable). Include a bulleted list detailing the attached documentation.
 - c. Lead them down the path to find proof of why you think the claim should be paid.
- 6 Submit each appeal within the stated timeframe. Generally, you will be allowed 1-2 appeals with the insurance company and then depending on your plan, an external appeal may be an option.
- 7 Take to social media. Respectfully share your story within your circles as well as the Facebook pages of your insurance company. Try sending a private Facebook message first (be sure to Like their page) and if your message goes unanswered, post a note seeking assistance.
- 8 If you need more information on the reimbursement process, check out our website: www.ottobockus.com/Financial-coverage.



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From small to tall, Ottobock offers a full line of positioning options, from infant through adult.

Visit the Mobility page of www.ottobockus.com to learn more about products designed for your comfort and independence.

Quality for life

From the beginning, Ryan was a fighter

Ryan had a rough start in life, but now he's going full speed ahead. Whether it's family activities or adaptive sports, the 6-year-old is ready for action.

Ryan and his twin sister McKenna were born prematurely, at 27 weeks. Both babies were tiny – McKenna weighed 1 lb., 14 oz. and Ryan was just 1 lb. 10 oz. Ryan's troubles multiplied when he contracted a bad infection, which led to sepsis. That left Ryan with a lot of challenges for a very little boy, but mom Cindi and dad Sean see the bigger picture.

"Nine out of 10 kids don't survive what he survived, so he is a true miracle," says Cindi.

Now age 6, Ryan leads a busy, active life with McKenna and their parents. "With activities and stuff we try to make it so things are fair between his sister and him," Cindi notes. "You know, with kids that are the same age, you want them to be able to do the same things."

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"He's got his mind set on a lot of things – he will achieve what he wants."
.....

Fishing and swimming are on the agenda for the family when the weather is nice. Good weather also brings team sports, including Ryan's adaptive baseball league, a particular favorite.

"The Miracle League baseball is amazing," Cindi says with a big smile, describing a ballfield that's twice as lively as any you might have seen, teeming with activity and happy kids. "There's kids in their chairs, there's kids in walkers, there's kids with other types of special needs... and all of them have helpers or aides. Everyone cheers on these kids, and they all have a great time."

Ryan clearly loves it. "Do you like being the catcher, or do you like hitting?" his mom asks him. "Both!" responds Ryan enthusiastically.

Ryan's sister McKenna exhibits the usual sisterly combination of competition and caring. One second, they are racing down the driveway, jostling to be first. The next, she's making sure he has the snack he wants. With the same infectious smiles, both activities appear equally enjoyable.

As the kids get older, the pace of family life speeds up, as you'd expect, but Sean and Cindi are very aware that busy-ness is a good thing, considering where they started. "I think as the kids are getting a little bit older we're able to experience some of the things that you couldn't when they were babies because of the medical issues that Ryan has had," Sean points out. "I think we've come a long way."



Ryan shows no sign of slowing down. “If it’s a school day, we have to eat breakfast, get dressed and just move as fast as possible,” laughs Cindi.

It’s important for Ryan’s mobility devices to keep up with him. He uses the Skippi PowerChair at school, and to get to and from activities.

And Cindi raves about Ryan’s new Mygo seating system. “The Mygo is amazing. We have the chair with the Hi-Low base, and then we have the Kimba stroller base that you can attach it to.

“We just put the Mygo on the Skippi. Before, we had a different type of seat on the Skippi, but Ryan was able to move his hips everywhere, and it just didn’t secure him, like the Mygo does. The Mygo really almost hugs him.”

Using the Skippi power chair with a controller sized for his hand, Ryan navigates the world. The Leckey Mygo seating system keeps him positioned perfectly to see and engage with family and friends.

Before the Skippi, Ryan either used a walker or was pushed in a wheelchair or stroller. Moving to the Skippi made a big difference for Ryan’s independence, an important factor as he got older and became even more interested in doing what all the kids were doing. He still has other mobility options, but powering up the Skippi seems to be his favorite.

His family created a very accessible home, too, from physical layout to counter height and privacy. As Ryan ages, they anticipate using a wheeled shower chair, where now they use a reclining bath chair. The sink is designed to be easy for him to roll under, too, for tooth brushing and other grooming.

Cindi says it’s getting tougher for her to keep up with Ryan. “I’m trying to give him more independence and let him do his thing, and he enjoys it, you know, he does,” she admits with a smile. “It’s nice to have that independence where he can do whatever he wants, on his own, and not to have to have Mom help him.”

A little parental protectiveness is natural, but mostly Cindi and Sean are impressed with their son. “The things that that little guy has been through, it just amazes me,” Cindi says with pride. “He’s a little fighter,” agrees Sean.

Since his shaky start, Ryan has continued to get physically stronger and better at walking. His spirit and motivation are strong, too. “He’s got his mind set on a lot of things – he will achieve what he wants,” says Cindi. “He’s such a bright, strong little boy that I think he’ll do whatever he puts his mind to.”

New website: easy-to-use, great information

Ottobock launched a new consumer website at the end of April: www.ottobockus.com (in Canada, www.ottobock.ca).

“We wanted to respond to the ever-growing numbers of consumers who want and need information on our products and services,” says Karen Lundquist, director of communications for Ottobock.

It’s no secret that online is often the first resource when searching for information.

“We want people who are new to prosthetics, orthotics, or mobility to check out this website first,” Lundquist notes. “We designed it to inform and educate consumers and their loved ones about what they need to know.” That’s one reason the site features educational sections like “Info for New Amputees” and “Mobility 101.” Sections on “Financial Coverage” and “Warranty Information” are also included.

And although products are described in depth, information is written for the layperson. The focus is on the advantages that people gain from using technology, not the technology itself.

“Ottobock has lots of very high-tech products, but you don’t need to hear about the engineering,” Lundquist points out. “You want to know what the amazing technology will do for you, in your life.”

The new site is packed with photos and videos of people telling their stories. “We want visitors to be able to hear from others who might be in similar situations,” says Lundquist. “It’s really useful to hear from someone who’s ‘been through it’ and can talk about how they dealt with challenges.”

Easy navigation was another focus.

A good search function and multiple navigation options help visitors get to the information they want within a few clicks. The new site has a design that’s accessible via mobile devices, too. Finally, the new website gives visitors lots of opportunities for interaction.

“Visitors can sign up to receive news and updates from Ottobock, access our Facebook pages, and share information with friends and family,” Lundquist notes.

Take a look today, and send us feedback on what you think!



Find an adaptive sporting event in your area

There are adaptive sporting events happening all over the country throughout the year for everything from running and cycling to archery and rock climbing. Online searches in Google or on Facebook will yield a wealth of resources and we suggested a search format like “adaptive cycling events Minneapolis” to find local events. You can also try:

- National organizations that specialize in offering adaptive sporting events like www.opafonline.org or www.adaptivesportsfoundation.org.
- Event aggregator sites such as www.sportsabilities.com collect information provided to them from adaptive sports organizers all over the country.
- Your city or town parks and recreation or disabilities departments will also have information on adaptive sporting events and groups, so go the old-fashioned route and give them a call.

Upcoming Events Fall 2013

Ottobock supports and participates in events all over the country.

- September 28 TODD Field Day in Minneapolis, MN

To find out more details on these or other events throughout the year, be sure to visit us daily on Facebook.

Meet Byron Backus, Certified Prosthetist (CP), Ottobock

How did you get started?

I had a degree in chemistry and biology, and was thinking about teaching, but I wasn't settled on it. After working a few years in retail I decided I'd like to be a computer programmer – but a counselor asked me to take an interest test – and “orthotic practitioner” came up as one of the options. That sounded interesting, so I went to sign up at the orthotics and prosthetics program. But –both programs were full at the time and prosthetics was the first one with an opening so that's the path I pursued. Believe it or not!

My first job was at the Shriners' Hospital for Children here in the Twin Cities. I worked there for 12 years and had a lot of fun working with kids. It was like getting visits from your nieces and nephews every day. And extremely rewarding.

My boss at Shriners' left to go to Ottobock, and he then called me and asked me to join him. That was a little over 10 years ago.

What is your job at Ottobock?

I started as an educator, training practitioners in our products. Then a few years ago, we started offering a consulting service called Cooperative Care. Because I had experience in both upper limb and lower limb prosthetics, the lead role fell to me. So, for the past three years, I've been privileged to work with practitioners who come to Minneapolis for help with patients with challenging or high-tech fittings.

What do you like best about your job?

The best part is helping patients, the end-users. That's always been the most satisfying for me – seeing the results of the work that I do. Seeing someone come in on crutches or in a wheelchair, and then leave by walking out the door. You can't beat that.

In a Cooperative Care appointment, the patient is here for a very short period of time and it's very intense – all the steps take place in a couple of days. In a regular practice situation, the process of fitting someone with a prosthesis may take weeks or sometimes months. But we want the process to get done in 2-4 days so that they can leave here with their trial prosthesis, ready to go. After a couple of weeks with the trial prosthesis and possible minor changes to the fit, the prosthesis is finished.

I just worked with a high school student not too long ago... and a week or two before that I worked with a gentleman about 70 years old. There's a great variety, but they're all memorable to me.

What advice would you give to amputees, new and experienced?

For new amputees, I would encourage them to find someone else who has gone through a similar experience – build a support system. For example, the Amputee Coalition is a great organization to get involved in. You need a community. People get blindsided by a disease or a traumatic accident and they need some support.

I remember one day at Shriners' a teenaged young lady literally walked over to a set of parents and said with a smile, “Your son looks just like me when I was a baby.” What a tremendous gift to give those parents, who were just getting used to having a child with limb loss. Here's a teenager – and she's doing great!

For more experienced amputees, I would say “Don't get stuck in a rut – technology is always advancing. Keep an ear to the ground and find out about what's new and what might work for you. Ask your practitioner – they're your partner in this.”

It's also really important to always let your practitioner know what problems you're having. You might think it's something you just have to put up with, but it just might be a simple adjustment that's needed.

For everyone: Remember, you're not alone. Seek out other people if you need to. You're only limited by yourself – think outside the box, enjoy what you want to do. Have a great life.



Byron Backus, Certified Prosthetist (CP)

A black and white photograph of a man with a prosthetic left leg, smiling and holding a mountain bike. He is wearing a dark polo shirt, shorts, and a backpack. The background is a blurred park setting with trees and grass. The Ottobock logo is in the top right corner.

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www.ottobockknees.com/test-drive

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Quality for life