Conferences and Symposia

2017 Federal Advanced Amputation Skills Training Symposium

During FY17, the Clinical Affairs staff at the Extremity Trauma and Amputation Center of Excellence (EACE; San Antonio, Texas), using intramural funds, assessed and advised on extremity trauma and amputation clinical care across the Department of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). The goal is to assist clinicians with guidelines and recommendations, education and training, and translation of current research into clinical practice. This line of effort is focused on developing strategies to improve collaboration, optimize system efficiencies, and enhance the continuum of care across the two federal healthcare systems. EACE Clinical Affairs facilitates relevant research, collaboration, and partnerships across multidisciplinary international, federal and academic networks to optimize the quality of life for DoD beneficiaries and Veterans.

Education and training is an essential subset for this line of effort. The Federal Advanced Amputation Skills Training Symposium (FAAST) is an annual training symposium developed collaboratively between the DoD and VA to provide federal healthcare professionals and researchers with advanced knowledge and skills that can be practically implemented into amputation care. This face-to-face training also minimizes knowledge gaps between the two federal healthcare systems.

The 2017 training event was held on the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences campuses on July 11–13, 2017 (Figure 1). Attended by more than 250 DoD/VA clinicians and researchers, the 2017 FAAST saw a 58 percent increase in participation from the previous year which allowed for 64 small group, hands-on training sessions. These training sessions provided eight times more skills training opportunities over previous years. The overwhelmingly positive responses from DoD and VA attendees were indicated by 95.1 percent of participants rating their overall satisfaction with the training as “agree” or “strongly agree” that the conference met its intended objectives for their development and application of new clinical skills.

FIGURE 1: General Session of the FAAST on osseointegration. (Figure used with permission from the authors)

The objectives for the 2017 FAAST were designed to provide information and small group hands on training on how to:

- Apply lower limb orthotic and prosthetic technology in practice
- Implement upper extremity orthotic and prosthetic technology

- Prescribe and select appropriate upper and lower extremity components for the care of persons with amputations being treated in a trans-disciplinary clinic setting
- Apply upper and lower limb amputation rehabilitation approaches to improve patient care and maximize clinical outcomes

Highlights of the training included:

- Multiple prosthetics laboratory sessions to review the ideal care for various amputations
- Clinician training on surgical and rehabilitation techniques for osseointegration of the humerus and the femur
- Three days of hands-on gait assessment, remediation, and outcomes metrics training
- Research highlights with poster, e-poster and platform sessions on twelve key topics
- Advanced upper extremity amputation rehabilitation and prostheses

There were three of the newly commercially available Life Under Kinetic Evolution arms for clinicians to examine and practice with as well as other cutting-edge tools and techniques. Clinicians could learn and practice functional skills to apply immediately upon returning to work.

In summary, provider and team education is a high priority for both DoD and VA to insure optimal care of traumatic combat amputees. Sharing knowledge, best practices, and research findings will enrich and sustain provider knowledge, skills, and abilities.