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What Is The Future Of Prosthetics?

By Gray Rollins

The emergence of inventive new materials, engineering breakthroughs, and advances in

microtechnology has served as the catalyst for innovation in modern prosthetics development. As a result of these advances, modern prostheses are more lightweight, more responsive, and more comfortable than models developed even just a few years ago. Wearers of prostheses have more options than ever before, allowing amputees to participate in life activities never before thought possible.

A number of new technologies are just beginning to become a reality for prosthetic wearers. Neuroelectronics is one of the industry's newest fields. Scientists studying cognitive control signals report that "eavesdropping" on neurons in the brain allow them to predict how the body will respond. The signals can be directed to a prosthetic brain, or electrical processing center, which interprets the signals and moves the prosthetic limb. For example, consider the individual who goes to reach for a book. As he decides to reach, he sends an invisible electrical signal to the brain that tells the body it needs to prepare to move. The brain receives the signal and decodes it, sending a signal to the right arm to extend and move towards the book. Scientists propose using these same mechanics to develop smart prosthetic devices. This entails tapping into neural signal pathways and using them to direct prosthetic limbs just as the brain directs natural limbs.

Sensor sockets are another new innovation in the field of prosthetic development. Sensor sockets are monitoring devices designed to serve as an interface between the limb and the prosthesis. The socket is comprised of a net of sensors that can detect information from the limb and transmit it directly to a medical facility for evaluation. The hope is that the information received from the socket sensor will allow rehabilitation doctors to evaluate the individual's condition and the performance of the limb. With time, doctors hope that the use of sensor sockets will be used as a means to maximize the effectiveness and comfort of the limb. The sensors could potentially allow for real−time adjustments in the performance of the prosthetic, thereby improving a patient's quality of life and enhancing patient treatment.

In addition to these two exciting new emerging technologies, progress continues to be made in the comfort and construction of current prosthetic devices. Incremental improvements in the flexibility,

cushioning, and rotational ability of modern artificial limbs increase a prosthetic's comfort and functionality, allowing prosthetic wearers to come closer to feeling like they are wearing a natural limb. And as the quality of prosthetics increases, prosthetic wearers are more able to resume activities previously made difficult by their lack of a natural limb.

Gray Rollins is a featured writer for ProstheticsCenter. To learn more about prosthetics, visit

http://www.prostheticscenter.com/futureofprosthetics/

and and

http://www.prostheticscenter.com/prostheticsresearch/

Help For Alopecia: The Locks Of Love Story

By Seth B.

There are many companies who make custom fitted real hair cranial prosthesis. Locks of Love (LOL) was first started in Dec. 1997 in connection with a for profit wig making company. The organization then obtained its 501c certification from the IRS. The charity began operating separately from the for profit retailer. This was spearheaded by Madonna Coffman a retired cardiac nurse who had a great deal of volunteer experience working for not for profits in the surrounding Palm Beach area.

In her 20's Mrs. Coffman developed Alopecia after receiving a hepatitis vaccination. With medication and a doctors care, she recovered 15 years later. Then her 4−year old daughter developed alopecia and lost all her hair. Madonna said "her hair loss was difficult to deal with but her daughter's was ten times harder". It was at this time that she quit all the other charity work and took on LOL as a full time volunteer.

Her humble beginnings. Mrs. Coffman's garage contained bins of mail and hair donations. By securing donated office space from a local hospital and working with a manufacturer of the highest quality prosthetics that she could find, LOL was off and running. Since the beginning the charity has received a great deal of support by both the media and its volunteers throughout the country. LOL has been featured or mentioned on television shows like Oprah, 20/20, The View, Jay Leno, Maury Povich, Good Morning America, CBS Good Morning, CNN Espanol and Inside Edition and in national publications including USA Today, The NY Times, People, Seventeen, Glamour, CosmoGirl, Self, Redbook, Woman's Day, ElleGirl, Child Magazine, and Ladies Home Journal. Over 2,000 hair donations are received through the mail each week. 80% of our hair donors are good hearted children.

The number of hairpieces produced has increased significantly since its inception, from 21 the first year to over 1,000. LOL has recipients in all 50 states and Canada and is working towards its goal to help every financially disadvantaged child suffering from long−term hair loss.

Richard Amburn

http://www.alopecia−treatment.com

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