movement or physical activity. As practitioners, it is our responsibility to provide patients with the information they need to be successful with their O&P devices. We can teach our patients how to self-evaluate and quantify their movements by asking questions to guide them, such as, "How often are you standing versus sitting?" "What does your non-exercise physical activity level look like?"

During one of the first weeks of my residency, I shadowed a practitioner who was consulting with a patient who has Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease. The patient complained of poor balance, back pain, difficulty walking, and difficulty participating in activities that he once enjoyed. I asked him what a normal day looked like (non-exercise movement practice). He told me he spent a lot of time sitting. I asked him if he exercised. He said that he used to swim. I told him that swimming was great and suggested he resume that activity. I told him the body is an adaptation machine and that it operates under the use-it-or-lose-it directive. Before he left, we talked a little more about what he was passionate about and why movement is important. We discussed posture and the difference between flexibility and mobility. I saw that patient in our office over a year later and he told me that talk changed his life; he was stronger, was in less pain, was enjoying outdoor activities, and had "way more energy."

That moment provided clarity for me. Out of all the healthcare professionals that he had seen, no one had suggested that he should move more or that poor posture might be an aggravating factor for his complaints. Just because people have been standing, walking, and breathing their whole lives doesn’t mean they are experts. By doing these tasks poorly, they are reinforcing poor habits and digging a deeper hole for themselves. Quantity does not trump quality. The human body is a smart system; when it is active and in a good position, it works well. Small changes are the easiest to make and offering simple coaching cues to patients can have a profound impact. By providing basic points of reference, you can help your patients move more and move better. Teach, talk, and discuss.

If a patient’s leg does not function well, discuss how it should function. Take the time to talk with the patient, answer questions, and provide information. Providing understanding equips patients with the tools to be successful and empowers patients to take ownership of their health. Explain how you are going to work together to improve their functionality. It is our responsibility as healthcare professionals to educate our patients, help them understand their bodies, and become competent movers. O&P EDGE

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References are available at www.opedge.com.