The relationship between college graduation and employment is seen in unemployment data, where the highest incidence of unemployment was observed among those with upper-limb amputations (20 percent), followed by those with transfemoral (16 percent) and transtibial (14 percent) amputations. By comparison, unemployment was reported by only 9 percent of those managed with limb-sparing surgeries and 10 percent of those managed nonsurgically.

Similar trends were observed with respect to income, where a reported income of less than $20,000 per year was most likely to be found among those with transfemoral (37 percent) and upper-limb (35 percent) amputations. These were followed by those with transtibial amputations (31 percent), nonsurgical management (27 percent), and those with limb-sparing surgeries (25 percent).

Summary
Viewed collectively, the observations of these two studies are encouraging. They suggest that children with congenital limb deficiencies tend to experience positive adult life situations with elevated rates of college attendance, no elevated rates of unemployment, and general optimism with regard to their future health and well-being. By contrast, the adult life situations of individuals with childhood cancers requiring amputations is less encouraging. The good news is that, even with fairly low thresholds, functional impairments and limited activities are less common. However, trends regarding college completion, unemployment, and income suggest that adults who required amputations due to cancer during childhood are more challenged than their peers who were managed either nonsurgically or with limb-sparing surgeries. Specifically, the contrast between college completion rates among those with congenital upper-limb deficiencies and those who acquired upper-limb amputations during childhood and adolescence suggest that the timing of a limb absence greatly impacts the person’s later life events.

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References