# Letters to the Editor

The following letters are in response to the Perspective in the April 2007 issue of ***The O&P EDGE:*** "A Letter to All Orthotists," by Peggy Pascal.

## A Needed Reminder

The recent letter to all orthotists by Peggy Pascal that was written so eloquently is just the reminder that we need. Thank you, Peggy. We need to remember why it is we are here and think about what it is we are doing.

**—Todd Saucier CO(c), RTPO,**
**Palliser Orthotic Prosthetic Clinic Ltd.**
**Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada**

## Perspective from Down Under

Having read the recent open letter from Peggy Pascal, I realize how lucky we are in Victoria, Australia. I too contracted polio at the age of four months. I am now 53, 4 ft. 9 in. tall, and it is my left leg that is paralyzed (and my weight is not nearly as good)….

I wore a KAFO (what we used to call callipers) until I was 16, when some of us in Australia were told to throw them away…and live our lives—not to think about polio again. It didn't seem to matter that…my ability to walk without a KAFO was against the laws of physics. We were part of a brave new experiment to see what would happen (so we find out now)!... We were encouraged to climb mountains—to be better than everyone else and do more than everyone else.


Tricia Malowney tries out a skateboard, at the insistence of her six-year-old nephew.

So we did that, and now we have post-polio syndrome. So I am back in a KAFO. I use Canadian crutches…and a scooter to get to my office and from one meeting to another…. Many people were fearful with the thought of going back into a KAFO, but I can tell you that it was the best thing I ever did, and I think part of that has to do with the team at Polio Services, Victoria, which is a clinic-based service. It is the only one of its kind in Australia and a real boon to polio survivors. They made sure that the KAFO I received met my needs and wants (including flesh-colored fiberglass so I can wear skirts) and listened to me when I said that something wasn't quite right.

Here we have a dedicated polio team, consisting of an orthotist, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, and a rehabilitation specialist…. [T]hey include the person with polio in every aspect of the decision-making process. This team approach has enabled us to work together for the best outcome…. We are genuinely able to share ideas, and we know that if we have a query or hear of some new innovation, we can put it to…the senior orthotist, who will tell us honestly…what is possible and what is not possible.

I am not saying they have all the answers, but there is certainly a respect for us—not only as consumers but as holders of the knowledge about our own bodies and our own needs. I would encourage all orthotists to talk to their clients and to try and work with other professionals who know about polio so that they can come to a solution that meets the needs of the person.

**—Tricia Malowney**
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**and Convenor, Victorian Women with Disabilities Network**
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***Editor's note:*** *To read the full text of Tricia Malowney's letter, go to www.oandp.com/edge*

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