

Community Health

The health of the community depends on a large number of people other than medical practitioners and nurses. These can be grouped under the heading of **allied health professionals**. They include the following:

- **Physiotherapists (physios)** help people to move by getting them to do exercises or by treating their body with heat or **massage** –treatment by manipulating muscles and joints with the hands.
- **Occupational therapists (OTs)** help people with a disability to perform tasks at home and at work. A **disability** is a physical or mental condition that makes it difficult to live normally, for example blindness or deafness.
- **Social workers** help people to solve their social problems – for example poor housing or unemployment – or family problems.
- **Chiropodists**, also known as **podiatrists**, treat conditions affecting the feet.

Technicians

There are numerous **technicians** – people who work with scientific equipment – such as radiographers, who are known as **X-ray technicians**. **Ambulance technicians** who work in the emergency medicine service. An ambulance technician with more advanced qualifications is called a **paramedic**.

Prosthetists and orthodontists

Prosthetists and orthodontists provide care for anyone who needs an **artificial limb**, (a prosthesis), or a device to support or control part of the body (an **orthosis**).They also advise on **rehabilitation** – helping patients return to normal life and work after treatment.

Prosthetists provide **artificial replacements** for patients who have had an **amputation** or were born without a limb.

Orthotists provide a range of **splints** and other devices to aid movement, correct **deformity** from an abnormal development of part of the body, for example **club foot** (talipes), and **relieve pain**.

Opticians

Opticians test **eyesight** and prescribe **glasses** – also known as **spectacles** – and **contact lenses**, when necessary. The examination includes measuring **intraocular pressure** – the pressure of fluid inside the eye – and examining the retina. If the optician suspects an eye disease, such as glaucoma, they refer the patient to an **ophthalmologist**, a doctor who specializes in diseases of the eye.

Make word combinations using a word from each box.

ambulance
artificial
club
contact
health
intraocular
occupational
social

foot
lens
limb
worker
pressure
technician
professional
therapist

Which allied health professionals could best help the following people?

- 1 a young unmarried woman who has just had a baby
- 2 a woman who is having difficulty using her right arm following a fracture
- 3 someone who needs glasses
- 4 an elderly woman who has had a below the knee amputation
- 5 a man whose wife has Alzheimer's disease
- 6 a man with a fungal infection of his feet

Complete the texts.

A prosthetist works with patients of all ages as a member of a clinical team, based at a large hospital. The patients may need a prosthesis as the result of an accident, or

(1) _____ following a disease such as diabetes. Alternatively they may have been born without a (2) _____. Orthotists work alongside doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational (3) _____ to give the people under their care the best possible (4) _____. Their main aim is to enable the patient to lead a normal life at work and leisure.

An orthotist often works in a clinic as part of an outpatient service and also visits other centres to provide a service for people with special needs. They deal with people of all ages. For instance, children who have cerebral palsy may require (5) _____ to help them walk and many older people need special shoes to correct (6) _____. If damaged, any part of the human skeleton may require some form of orthosis. The orthosis may be needed to reposition the body or to (7) _____ pain.

Express your idea.

Britain is introducing a new member to the healthcare team, called a medical care practitioner (MCP), similar to the physician assistant in the United States and other countries. The MCP will be able to carry out some of the functions of a medical practitioner, such as history-taking and examination, and diagnosis and treatment of certain illnesses, without having a medical degree. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this in your opinion?