Bionic Leg Uses Artificial Intelligence, Restores Muscle Power for Amputees

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BETHESDA, Md., March 29 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Popular Science Magazine deemed it the first "prosthesis with a brain." Amputees involved in beta testing report it is the closest they've ever felt to having their natural leg back. The first and only amputee in the world to receive the production model, Retired U.S. Army Ranger Bill Dunham says, "the power it gives me is incredible."

The power Dunham refers to is muscle power and the "smart" prosthesis generating this buzz is the POWER KNEE(TM) by Ossur. The first bionic leg to employ artificial intelligence that communicates with the amputee's sound leg is also the first artificial leg that replaces lost muscle activity with internal motors. For the amputee, this means a more natural gait, a reduction of energy consumption, and the ability to do things above-knee amputees couldn't do before, such as walking upstairs foot-over-foot, standing up from a seated position unassisted, or walking through dense environments such as snow, sand, tall grass, or leaves.

"The POWER KNEE is truly amazing technology. After only a week of wearing it, I was receiving compliments from friends and family about my gait. They commented on how smooth and natural it looked. For me, that's extremely encouraging," said Dunham, who lost his leg in Panama during Operation "Just Cause" when attempting to secure Rio Hato airfield and apprehend Manuel Noriega.

Dunham, a patient of the U.S.-based patient care company Hanger Prosthetics and Orthotics, became the first amputee in the world to receive the production model of the POWER KNEE in January. The largest orthotic and prosthetic patient care company in the world, Hanger was selected by Ossur, the Icelandic manufacturer of the POWER KNEE, to bring the technology to the United States.

"The POWER KNEE is an incredible advancement in prosthetic technology; it brings us one step closer to replicating normal human walking for amputees," said John Rheinstein, a certified prosthetist with Hanger who led the New York City-based patient evaluation beta tests with oversight from scientists and clinical experts from Ossur. "The most encouraging aspect about the eight- week clinical trial was that a number of the patients actually became better walkers, with improved gaits, as a result of using the POWER KNEE."

Soon, Dunham will not be the only U.S. veteran wearing the POWER KNEE. According to Ossur Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Tim McCarthy, prosthetists at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC are currently using the POWER KNEE on returning veterans from the War in Iraq. In addition, prosthetists at Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas are currently evaluating the POWER KNEE with the intent of providing this technology.

Dunham is in the process of becoming a certified peer counselor who will visit with wounded veterans from the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a fellow soldier injured in battle, Dunham empathizes with the wounded men and women: "I've been there. I know what it's like to lay there thinking my life will never be the same. When you've lost your leg, you wonder what else you have lost."

Amputees interested in learning more about the POWER KNEE should contact Hanger at 1-877-4HANGER.

About Ossur: Ossur (Icelandic Stock Exchange: OSSR) is a trusted and global leader in the development, manufacturing, distribution, sales and marketing of prosthetics and bracing and support products. Headquartered in Reykjavik, Iceland, the company has 13 offices and over 1200 employees along with a comprehensive global distribution network. Given its mission to offer people a life without limitations, Ossur allocates an industry record of approximately seven percent of its revenue on medical technology research and development and is the world-wide leader in applying bionic technology to the field of prosthetics. Ossur provides extensive education programs through the Ossur Academy and sponsors a variety of community outreach programs and non- profit organizations.

For more information, visit http://www.ossur.com.

About Hanger Orthopedic Group, Inc.: Hanger Orthopedic Group, Inc. (NYSE: HGR), headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, is the world's premier provider of orthotic and prosthetic patient care services. Hanger is the market leader in the United States, owning and operating 624 patient care centers in 46 states including the District of Columbia, with 3,290 employees including 1,021 practitioners (as of 12/31/05). Hanger is organized into four units. The two key operating segments are patient care which consists of nationwide orthotic and prosthetic practice centers and distribution which consists of distribution centers managing the supply chain of orthotic and prosthetic componentry to Hanger and third party patient care centers. The third unit is Linkia which is the first and only provider network management company for the orthotics and prosthetics industry. The fourth unit, Innovative Neurotronics, introduces emerging neuromuscular technologies developed through independent research in a collaborative effort with industry suppliers worldwide. For more information, visit http://www.hanger.com.

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