

Medicine or Marketing?

The manufacturers of **total hip** and **total knee** prostheses have entered the landscape pioneered several years ago by pharmaceutical manufacturers as it pertains to marketing. The premise here is to market directly to the public as a way to sway physician practice to meet “public demand”.

With the unveiling of the latest in **total knee replacements** the “gender specific knee” we are drawn ever closer to the precipice of marketers spinning science to generate profits.

In the early days of **total hip and total knee replacement** development there were a myriad of designs, as variable as the multitude of body styles currently available for automobiles. With the passage of time the advances of science as to what constitutes a life-like design in replicating the normal hip and knee have winnowed down the outliers to where now there is very little design difference between the various manufacturers. This has left these companies grasping for other ways to set themselves above the others in order to sell more of their own product line. And what better way than to take an apparently logical argument, add a bit of hot button social/political content and let the bandwagon begin to fill.

Do current total hip and knee prostheses replicate exactly normal anatomy, male or female? No, but they are vastly improved over previous designs. Currently are there differences in outcomes in total hip and knee replacements comparing males with females. No. And there have always been multiple sizes and constructs available to handle individual variations in anatomy, and all manufacturers are increasing the number of options one has for sizing.

In the end, the “marketing” of medicine will best be continued through well controlled trials presented in peer reviewed journals. Let us hope that we as doctors can be the trusted source of information guiding patient education, and not let it fall into the hands of the spin doctors.