



NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board

Newsletter
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IAN COLLIER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Board is pleased to announce the successful applicants of the 2008 Ian Collier Memorial Scholarship. Three applications were received and after careful consideration the Board granted the following funding:

Category 2 - Study project in the field of physiotherapy

Anita Mudge was granted \$10,000 to conduct the research "*Does neuromuscular electrical stimulation in conjunction with stretching improve outcomes following botulinum toxin A in children with cerebral palsy: A randomized within participants controlled trial*".

Wai Man Regina Leung was granted \$2,673 for her project "*Does short term Sun style Tai Chi improve exercise capacity in people with COPD? - A single blind randomised controlled trial*".

Category 3 - Distance learning program for non-metropolitan physiotherapists

Kerstin McPherson was granted \$3,532 to undertake a postgraduate certificate in Physiotherapy (Pelvic Floor).

The Board congratulates the successful applicants and looks forward to receiving the outcomes in due course.

Applications are now called for the 2009 Ian Collier Memorial Scholarship. This is open to physiotherapists currently registered in NSW and who have worked in NSW for a minimum of two years full time practice, or equivalent, within the last five years.

The scholarship aims to encourage research that addresses public safety and includes the following categories:

1. Assistance to publish clinical research activity
2. Study project in the field of physiotherapy
3. Distance learning program for non-metropolitan physiotherapists

A maximum of \$10,000 is available annually. A \$10,000 scholarship may be awarded to a single applicant or scholarships totaling \$10,000 may be divided amongst a number of applicants. Funding may be granted for a project that extends beyond a 12-month period.

Applications, enquiries and requests for an information package can be directed to:

The Registrar

NSW Physiotherapists Registration Board
PO Box K599, Haymarket NSW 1238

Telephone: (02) 9219 0255

Fax: (02) 9211 9318

Application forms can also be downloaded from the Board's website.

The closing date is 31 July 2009. Notification of the 2009 scholarship awards will be made at the end of September 2009.

ON-LINE REGISTRATION

The Board has been developing its online service capability. Physiotherapists now have the option of completing their annual renewal of registration online, including submission of online forms and making payments online. The system allows you to:

- Pay your registration renewal fees online using your credit card.
- Submit your annual return form.
- Provide your continuing professional education details.
- Provide your professional indemnity insurance details.
- Update your address.
- Submit your workforce survey.

You can access the online system from the Physiotherapists Registration Board website:

<http://www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au>

Follow steps 1 – 4 below:

1. Click on the red ...[Click Here](#) ...link and fill out the online access form.
2. The system will immediately generate your user name and password which will be sent to you by email.
3. Upon receipt of the email, you can login with your issued user name and password (you can copy and paste your user name and password directly from the email into the login screen). You

should change the system generated password to something you will remember.

4. Follow the instructions and links on the site to renew your registration online.

You still have the option of completing the renewal and declaration forms and mailing them to the Physiotherapists Registration Board at:

PO Box K599,
Haymarket NSW 1238.

Questions regarding the online system can be directed to the Board's email address:

physioreg@hprb.health.nsw.gov.au

ANNUAL RETURN DECLARATION AND BPAY

It is a mandatory requirement to complete annual return declarations every year.

Registrants paying their annual fees by BPay are often not completing their mandatory declaration and providing it to the Board. Information about mandatory declarations and repeated reminders have appeared in previous newsletters (Issues 34 and 35) but currently there are still approximately 170 registrants that have not submitted their declaration for last year. These registrants are in breach of the legislation and the Board has little alternative other than to pursue these breaches. The mandatory declaration requires information to be provided to the Board on matters such as professional indemnity insurance, professional development, impairment and any criminal proceedings. If you plan to pay your annual renewal by BPay this year remember to also submit your mandatory declaration.

IMPAIRED REGISTRANTS PROCESS

Physiotherapists, like the rest of the community, can suffer from physical or mental illness. These may be temporary conditions or a gradual deterioration resulting in chronic illness. If a physiotherapist is impaired, there is the possibility this will affect their ability to properly care for patients.

The Physiotherapists Act 2001 defines an impaired physiotherapist as one who suffers from any physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder that detrimentally affects, or is likely to detrimentally affect, the physiotherapist's physical or mental capacity to practise physiotherapy. This may include a physiotherapist who habitually abuses alcohol or is addicted to a deleterious drug.

Registrants are required to declare to the Board if they have an impairment, how the impairment impacts on practice and what strategies are in place to manage the impairment and its impact on practice. Many physiotherapists with an impairment manage their situation very well. Some, however, may not be aware they have problems, and therefore resist offers of support or help. Other impaired physiotherapists who are aware of their shortcomings, may attempt to mask their problems. If they continue to practise without seeking professional assistance it is often only a matter of time before there are serious consequences for physiotherapists in these situations.

Any person can notify the Board if they think that a registered physiotherapist may suffer from an impairment. A registered physiotherapist should also approach the Board for assistance in relation to their own health problem rather than risking the lodgment of a complaint by another person.

When dealing with these matters, The Board sets up an Impaired Registrants Panel. The Panel consists of 2 persons, at least one of which is a registered physiotherapist. After inquiry, assessment and medical examination, where appropriate, the Panel can recommend participation in a rehabilitation program and may place conditions on the physiotherapist's registration. The objective is usually to assist the physiotherapist to continue to practice, but within appropriate parameters and supports to protect the public.

Processes for managing impaired practitioners are separate from complaints and disciplinary systems, even though a complaint about a practitioner may be the first indicator of an impairment.

AUSTRALIA DAY 2009 HONOURS

The Board congratulates Ms Jennifer McConnell for being awarded a Member of the Order (AM) in the General Division in the Australia Day 2009 Honours List. The award is for service to physiotherapy as a practitioner and researcher, particularly through the development of innovative musculoskeletal pain management techniques.

NATIONAL REGISTRATION AND ACCREDITATION UPDATE

There have been further developments in the move towards a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for ten health professional groups in Australia. The proposed structure includes:

- A Ministerial Council made up of State Health Ministers.
- An Agency with a Management Committee responsible for administrative and financial matters.
- A National Board for each of the ten health professional groups.
- State committees with responsibilities delegated by the National Boards.

The Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) will continue in its current role, including accrediting physiotherapy education programs.

Recent communiqués have announced the appointment of the Agency Management Committee and that the new Agency office will be located in Melbourne. For more information go to:

www.nhwt.gov.au/natreg.asp

BOARD MEMBERS

Mr David Young resigned from the Board in November 2008 after serving on it for 5 years. He demonstrated great commitment and professionalism in dealing with all matters. Amongst the many tasks undertaken by David was his active role and responsibility for initiating the development and updating of policy statements and clinical guidelines that support professional standards. The Board thanks him for his positive contribution and achievements and wishes him well for the future.

The Board is pleased to introduce Mr Michael Ryan as the new APA nominated member of the Board replacing David Young. Michael has extensive clinical experience and is a Fellow of the Australian College of Physiotherapists, working as a specialist in musculoskeletal physiotherapy. He works primarily in private practice in Sydney, as a principal physiotherapist in his clinic in North Ryde. He is an independent physiotherapy consultant for WorkCover (NSW) and a forensic physiotherapist in civil legal proceedings. In addition to his clinical achievements, Michael has been actively involved in professional activities with the APA, including years of operating at a senior level with musculoskeletal physiotherapy. He is currently a Director of the National APA Board and is Australia's representative to the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manual Therapists (IFOMT). He is very proud to be serving on the Board and the Board is very pleased to have him as part of the team.

MANAGING BARIATRIC PATIENTS

Obesity is a growing problem in the Australian population and there are increasing numbers of overweight and obese patients requiring health services. International literature suggests that a bariatric patient is a patient who is obese and whose weight exceeds or appears to exceed the identified safe working load/weight capacity of standard facility equipment such as beds, mechanical lifters, manual handling devices, crutches and other mobility aids etc.

NSW Health stipulates that to meet the key objectives of providing good health care and equity of access for bariatric patients, health facilities should have a system in place for their management (Bariatric Patient Management Plan). NSW Health has established guidelines in the document "Occupational Health & Safety Issues Associated with Management of Bariatric (Severely Obese) Patients", document number GL200_070, published Sept 2005. This is available on the NSW Health website:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/gl/2005/GL2005_070.html

Currently bariatric patient numbers are only small, but the consequences of not being properly prepared can be significant for both patient and staff. The OH & S issues related to treatment of bariatric patients applies to physiotherapists as much as any other health professional.

Physiotherapy facilities/practices should have a Bariatric Management Plan, which includes the principles of:

- providing dignity and respect for these patients;
- conducting risk assessments;
- providing a safe working environment for patients/staff;
- providing suitable mobility aids, including crutches and walking frames;
- having available suitable treatment beds/plinths; and
- having available manual handling and patient lifting equipment and protocols for using the equipment.

Check the safe working load/limit (SWL) of equipment to avoid the risk of equipment breaking and affecting patient safety. SWL is specified by the manufacturer and denotes the maximum safe load bearing capacity of equipment. The girth of a patient should also be considered to ensure allocation of equipment with the necessary dimensions.

Facilities/practices should conduct audits of their equipment to identify SWL and dimensions to ensure availability of suitable equipment in the event of a bariatric patient presenting for treatment.

Check the guidelines on the NSW Health website, develop your Bariatric Management Plan and check your equipment to make sure you are properly prepared.

PATIENT CARE COMMUNICATION

Ineffective communication in patient care is a common and important issue identified by the Board in many of its investigations into complaints against physiotherapists. This problem can be more prevalent when physiotherapists are treating patients from other cultures or where English is not the patient's first language. Physiotherapy involves a high level of "hands on" activity with a certain amount of disrobing. This can easily be misinterpreted as sexual misconduct in instances where there is insufficient communication prior to treatment. Some patients may find disrobing inappropriate and uncomfortable. Physiotherapists have to be sensitive to this whether due to a different cultural background, language difficulties or personal values. Physiotherapists need to respect the modesty and privacy of all patients. In situations where modesty may be an issue, physiotherapists should use appropriate strategies to minimise the risk of perceived sexual misconduct. Suggested strategies include:

- Providing explanations to the patient prior to treatment regarding the technique/procedure to be used, the rationale for the proposed technique/procedure and the need to undress but with adequate draping.
- Obtaining appropriate consent prior to treatment.
- Providing draping automatically and not just when asked.
- Learning more about other cultures and their perspective in relation to exposing parts of their body in public and during medical examination or treatment.

- Developing information sheets on physiotherapy treatment in different languages, particularly when working in an area with a high proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Use of interpreter services where appropriate.

RANDOM INSPECTIONS

The Board's primary responsibility of public protection includes ensuring compliance with the Act and investigating certain matters. The Health Professional Registration Boards (HPRB) inspectors assist by visiting physiotherapy (and other health professional) facilities/practices to:

1. Investigate the circumstances surrounding a matter (eg a complaint against a registrant) and collect factual information to assist the Board in its deliberations.
2. Monitor a registrant's adherence to orders of the Board.
3. Monitor compliance with specific requirements under the Act or associated legislation.

Inspectors are concerned with matters of a factual nature requiring on site verification, not clinical reasoning.

As well as acting on specific directions of the Board, inspectors may undertake random inspections of physiotherapy facilities/practices, including checking on matters such as registration of practitioners, professional indemnity insurance and cleanliness of facilities.

DRY NEEDLING

The Board reviewed a case of dry needling which resulted in a life threatening pneumothorax. The investigation highlighted some important issues and resulted in the following recommendations:

- Dry needling courses should conform to the profession's guidelines requiring two days of training, more formal competency testing and the ability to recognise the signs and symptoms of pneumothorax and appropriate first aid treatment.
- The profession should more clearly identify risk factors associated with adverse events such as the size and weight of the patient and those conditions, such as respiratory diseases or mental health, which might increase the severity of such adverse events. These risks and associated factors should be given more emphasis in training programs.
- Dry needling should not be performed over high-risk areas of the body, including the thorax, until such time as a more accurate depth of penetration measurement is available. As a minimum standard, if dry needling is to be used, the guide tube should not be removed and the needle should not be manipulated.
- If dry needling is to be used over a high-risk area, there should be written consent and the procedure should not be performed on the first visit to allow the patient more time to reflect on the information provided.

- Given the potential for serious adverse events from dry needling over high-risk areas, the profession should critically review the efficacy of this technique so that individual practitioners can more accurately evaluate the potential risks and benefits.

The Board has conveyed these recommendations to the APA and an article on the practice of acupuncture /dry needling has been published in InMotion.

STATISTICS

As at 30 April 2009 a total of 6941 physiotherapists were registered in NSW. There have been 319 new registrations since 1 January 2009.

241	NSW graduates
11	Interstate graduates
38	Mutual Recognition
25	Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition
4	Overseas graduates

Copies of the NSW Physiotherapists Act 2001 and Regulations can be obtained from:

1. *SALMAT, Level 3, McKell Building, 2-24 Rawson Place, Sydney NSW 2000.*
Tel: 1300 656 986
Fax: (02) 9372 8993 or
2. On line at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

**Visit the NSW Physiotherapists
Registration Board website:**

www.physioreg.health.nsw.gov.au