

[AFOEM Fellows interview series](#)

This series provides insight into the careers of retired and actively serving physicians in occupational medicine. I am very privileged and extremely humbled to continue to meet inspiring colleagues. On this occasion I had the pleasure of talking to Dr Robyn Horsley.

Farhan: Welcome Robyn, please tell us about yourself, personal life, and training?

Robyn: Mother of two daughters and married to Peter, a GP in Hopper's Crossing for forty years. We have two adorable young grandsons.

Both our daughters are entrepreneurial. Our older daughter is an Innovation Lawyer with Gilbert and Tobin. She also has an online high end corporate handbag business – 'She Lion'. Our younger daughter is in the first year of the Physicians' Training Programme. She has an online platform for education of medical students – 'Beauty within medicine' and is about to publish her first textbook on Respiratory medicine, called "Breathe".

At a personal level, I love to play golf and Hike. Hiking is a particular interest – We are about to do the six-day Flinders Ranges walk in SA. We have done a lot of hikes including Cradle Mountain in Tassie / part of the Camino / Tura Hura in NZ/ Cape to Cape in WA/ Three Capes in Tassie etc.

Farhan: Please tell us how you developed an interest in Occupational Medicine.

Robyn: I was an athlete in my early days – a 400 metre runner and wanted to do Sports medicine after completing three years post graduate at the Austin Hospital. I joined a sports medicine clinic in Victoria Pde, which also had an occupational medicine arm. I much preferred the Occupational Medicine work. With the guidance of my mentor Dr Bill Stone, I did a Masters in Public Health, and with my supervisor, Dr Denehy, I completed the requirements to 'Grandfather' as an Occupational Physician in 1988.

Farhan: Let's talk about your achievements, memories & highlights of your career.

Robyn:

- Consultancy recognition Of Occupational Physicians with NASQAC (National Australian Qualifications Assessment Committee) in 1995 - Medicare item numbers for Occupational Physician consultations. The initial submission was co-authored with Dr Catherine Hamilton / the negotiations with Government were co-managed with Dr Ian Gardiner. This was crucial for establishing private practice in occupational medicine.
- This then allowed negotiation for Item numbers for Occupational Physicians under Workcover (at the time) and TAC – 1996. Dr Clayton Thomas represented Rehabilitation Medicine and I represented Occupational Medicine.
- Six years on Federal Council with four years as Secretary
- 11 years on the Education Sub Committee / lead fellow of the AFOEM practical exam for 10 years

- Lecturer / Tutor of medical students at Monash University for 14 years
- Assisting many hundreds of workers with RTW management by addressing complex psychosocial issues.
- I was Honoured to receive the AFOEM President's medal for Education in 2010.
- I was Honoured to receive an Order of Australia Medal for services to Occupational Medicine in 2012.

Farhan: What's your legacy?

Robyn:

- Consultancy recognition of Occupational and Environmental medicine by Medicare (for referred workers) and then gaining item numbers for WorkSafe / TAC referred workers from GP's and Employers. The Item numbers vastly increased the potential scope of private practice for all occupational physicians.
- Education and mentoring of trainee occupational Physicians.
- Impacting positively on the lives of injured workers and their families by addressing psychosocial issues, with the focus on RTW in the first instance, but also addressing avocational needs as required. I have always had a particular interest in assisting workers living with significant disability and mental health issues.

Farhan: What are you still working on or have further plans to do?

Robyn: I was appointed to the Workcover Advisory Committee in 2015, (with a recent reappointment). This is an influential committee reporting to the Board, representing various stakeholders in the workers compensation system. With two Ombudsman's reports highlighting issues with the system in 2016 and again in 2019, the provision of insights from clinical practice and the ability to influence current policies, has and will remain a focus, until my tenure ends.

Farhan: Do you have a message for Trainees and Fellow Occupational Physicians?

Robyn: As Occupational Physicians, we have the capacity to make a real difference in the lives of the workers we assess and manage. To make a difference, we must listen to those workers, undertake comprehensive assessments, and develop realistic action plans. The clinical skills required, however, develop over time. My advice to new Occupational Physicians is to not truncate the development of those skills with a practice focused on medico legal assessments.

My second piece of advice is to give back. Get involved with Faculty committees, supervising, writing examination questions, examining etc. The Faculty is very collegiate, and involvement will greatly enhance and enrich your lifelong career as an Occupational and Environmental physician.