

CHAPTER 2

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

It was not an easy task in the 1950s to develop rehabilitation facilities. The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service was under the direction of the Department of Social Services but any medical services for non-pensioners were the responsibility of the state health departments.

New South Wales

In NSW in the early 50s people like George Burniston, Naomi Wing¹, Adrian Paul², and Selwyn Nelson³ were leading the way.

Naomi Wing established the first hospital rehabilitation unit at the Royal South Sydney Hospital. In his speech given in 1993 at the commemorative dinner for the founders of the AAP&RM Don Caine remembered fondly that: *“Naomi did everything she could to make the profession aware of rehabilitation and over the years, organised weekend seminars for doctors and allied health professionals.”* *“Naomi wasn’t always the easiest person to get along with and she had a fiendish habit of phoning at six in the morning to voice her displeasure.”*

Later that same evening Richard Jones described her as: *“the Fred Hollows of Rehabilitation”... “who was the bane of the Health Commission in her dedication to providing a Rehabilitation program for the injured worker and in her civilian Rehabilitation Practice.”*

The rehabilitation unit at the Royal South Sydney Hospital was opened on 13 September 1956 and was in operation until 1993. It began in an old army hut purchased for seventy-five pounds raised through local fund raising activities. A modern, purpose-built Rehabilitation Centre with extensive facilities including a hydrotherapy pool and an Independent Living Ward was inaugurated in 1976 and was named the Naomi Wing Rehabilitation Centre. At that time the Naomi Wing Rehabilitation Centre at Royal South Sydney Hospital had a well-deserved reputation as the pioneering and leading institution in rehabilitation of the injured worker.

George Burniston was the first Rehabilitation Medicine academic appointment when he was appointed Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of New South Wales and the Prince Henry and Prince of Wales Hospitals. He inaugurated the first hospital based training program at the Prince Henry Hospital. Selwyn Nelson was responsible for establishing the first postgraduate qualification with the Diploma of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine under the auspices of the University of Sydney Committee in Postgraduate Education.

Newcastle, New South Wales

In the period following World War II, the Royal Newcastle Hospital staff, both medical and allied health were also helping to pioneer the modern concepts of rehabilitation management. Both the medical model of disability and the social model of disability

¹ See biography at the end of this publication

² See biography at the end of this publication

³ See biography at the end of this publication

had been the guiding principles in developing various services at an inpatient and outpatient level. These hospital services had seen the revolution of what is now regarded as an integral part of modern management, the multidisciplinary team. Chris McCaffrey, the Medical Superintendent at that time, encouraged the development of these services.

Pioneers in this rehabilitation work at the Royal Newcastle Hospital were Dick Gibson (Geriatrician), Roy Mills (Chest Physician) and Gordon Kerridge (Orthopaedic Surgeon).

In parallel with the hospital-based services there was also a strong tradition of vocational rehabilitation promoted by BHP and associated industries. The Department of Rehabilitation Medicine grew from these foundations and started to be established in 1976. These services were subsequently mainly coordinated under the Hunter Rehabilitation Service. The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service became a partner in the service development for a period of time.

The years following 1976 saw the gradual expansion of rehabilitation services that now include generalist and specialist at inpatient, outpatient and community phases across Hunter New England. Faculty training positions have been approved at the Royal Newcastle Centre, the Rankin Park Centre (John Hunter Hospital) and at Tamworth Base Hospital. Fellows of the Faculty provide a comprehensive service with a strong commitment also to education and research.

Illawarra Region, New South Wales

The first doctor appointed to work in the field of rehabilitation in this region was Max Diamond. Unfortunately he passed away before the ACRM was formed. David Manohar was the first Rehabilitation Medicine trained Fellow to be appointed to the region in 1976, while Joe Sandanam began working in the region in 1980. At present the Illawara region has a well established rehabilitation network including an academic position in the University of Wollongong.

Victoria

The book *The Wounded Warrior and Rehabilitation*⁴, written by Bruce Ford, an Honorary Fellow of the AFRM, is an excellent resource that particularly records the history and development of facilities of rehabilitation care in Victoria that were started at No 11 Caulfield Army General Hospital in 1915. These services later evolved into the Caulfield General Medical Centre and REHABtech. Bruce Ford's book was launched on 31 July 1996 at Caulfield General Medical Centre by the President of the RSL, Bruce Ruxton. The book traces the history of the rehabilitation concept and shows how it has been interpreted and delivered at different times.

It was Leigh Wedlick who founded the first rehabilitation hospital in Victoria, Hampton Hospital, and he too wrote a short book, looking at the early days of Hampton Hospital. Leigh Wedlick worked for a short time at the Alfred Hospital before being appointed in 1937 as Head of the Physiotherapy Department at Royal Melbourne Hospital, a position he held for twenty years. He spent half of his time running this department and

⁴ *The Wounded Warrior and Rehabilitation - Including the History of No 11 Army General Hospital / Caulfield Rehabilitation Hospital by Ford, Bruce Melbourne Australia: Caulfield General Medical Centre, 1996. 141 pages b/w photos*

advocating the benefits of physiotherapy and the rest of his time running a general medicine practice. In 1945 Frank May joined the practice, which soon developed into the largest private clinic for physical medicine in Australia. It was after his compulsory retirement from Royal Melbourne Hospital in the late 1950s that Leigh Wedlick was approached to set up Hampton Hospital.

Peter Colville's contribution to the development of rehabilitation services in Victoria began in the 1950s in the field of Paediatric Rehabilitation through the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) and the polio aftercare service of the Victorian Health Department. He worked at Fairfield Hospital between 1951 and 1995 when it was closed.

Queensland

In describing the development of rehabilitation medicine services in Queensland, mention should be made of the contributions made by both Frank Johnson and Paul Hopkins.

In 1977 the Queensland Group of the AAP & RM was formed with Frank Johnson chairing.

South Australia

Dr. Arthur William (Bunt) Burnell became the head of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital in 1958 after he had returned from training at the University College Hospital and St Thomas Hospital in London and receiving his Diploma in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

He was instrumental in the establishment of Domiciliary Care Service (1970) which provided care and rehabilitation for patients living in the community of North and Western Adelaide. With Dr Don Dowie, the Alfreda Rehabilitation Centre was developed in 1971 and encompassed an amputee service. He was a founding member of possibly the first Australian multidisciplinary pain clinic. See DA Simpson et al: "Experiences in a pain clinic" MJA (1965) 1:671-675.

Dr Burnell was awarded the AM in 1983 for his services to Medicine especially in the field of Domiciliary Care. He was also honoured to have been a Federal President of the Australian Association of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and a Federal president of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

Dr John Durkin trained under Dr Burnell, and after obtaining the Dip. PMR lead the Department after Dr Burnell became ill in 1978. Under John Durkin, Alfreda Rehabilitation became a national model for occupational rehabilitation with workshops, hydrotherapy, work assessment and simulations programmes.

Gary Andrews was the foundation professor and Director of the Department of Community Medicine at Westmead in 1979 before moving to South Australia in 1983. He became the Chief Executive Officer of the South Australian Health Commission and Professor in the School of Medicine at Flinders University. He was also the Director of the Centre for Ageing Studies at that university. Between 1982 and 1984, he was the President of the Australian College of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM).

Dennis Smith, who served as President of the AFRM in 1994 and 1995, migrated from the UK to Australia in 1979 to take up the Foundation Chair in Rehabilitation at

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the Flinders University of South Australia. He established the Rehabilitation Studies Unit at Repatriation General Hospital Daw Park, as a centre for rehabilitation research and undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and training. He significantly influenced the practice of musculoskeletal medicine and especially occupational rehabilitation by encouraging a balance of scientific medicine and practical management.