

CHAPTER 4

THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF REHABILITATION MEDICINE

A college of Rehabilitation Medicine was first suggested in the early 1960s when Don Caine and Graeme Shepherd wrote to the AAP&RM with the suggestion. A steering committee to look at the idea was set up and Naomi Wing was invited to chair the group. However, when the proposal to establish a Diploma Course in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation was accepted by the Australian Federation of Post Graduate Medicine, the activities of this first College Steering Committee were redirected to concentrate on curriculum writing. The Federation provided the principal source of postgraduate education in Rehabilitation Medicine for the next 15 years.

After the DPRM had failed to be officially recognised for remuneration of specialists as a specialist qualification, George Burniston, Don Caine, Bob Oakeshott, Ben Marosszky and Bradney Norington became involved in this initiative to establish a separate specialist College. The principal role of the College would be to provide postgraduate training in the field of Rehabilitation Medicine throughout Australia.

In November 1976 a College Sub-Committee was formed with Ben Marosszky as coordinator/chairman, to investigate the establishment of a specialist college for Rehabilitation Medicine with a proposed training program, as well as considering a feasible financial structure and drafting Articles and Memorandum of Association.

The concept of forming the Australian College of Rehabilitation Medicine was passed by an overwhelming majority at the Annual General Meeting of the AAP&RM in October 1977. Consultation with other medical colleges was then sought to seek co-operation in providing such a special college for the vocational, academic and training aspects of the specialty of Rehabilitation Medicine, which relates so closely to numerous other specialties.

College Articles and Memorandum were approved in December 1977. A College Implementation Committee was then set up, to first meet on 11 February 1978, for incorporation of the College to proceed.

The Australian College of Rehabilitation Medicine was incorporated as a public company in New South Wales on 22 August 1979 and was inaugurated on 23 February 1980 with 127 Foundation Fellows. The College was inaugurated by the Governor General of Australia, Sir Zelman Cowen at the University of New South Wales. When explaining the establishment of the College George Burniston was quoted to have said: "We have felt the need for a single postgraduate educative authority which would focus special attention on Rehabilitation Medicine, recognising the particular body of knowledge and ethical practice that it represents and acknowledging its close affinity with other disciplines of medicine and surgery and of the allied health sciences."¹

Bradney Norington was appointed as President when the College was established in 1979, but the first elected College President was George Burniston, with Ben Marosszky elected as the Honorary Secretary, a position he held for the first seven or eight years of its existence. Don Caine held the position of Honorary Treasurer and

¹ Page 7, *AMA Gazette*, April 3 1980

Bruce Ford was the Chairman of the Board of Censors. The College Office was located at 55 Charles Street in Ryde, and was provided rent-free by the Royal Rehabilitation Centre, Sydney.

A three-year training program was established. There were 14 training positions available in the Sydney area when the College was inaugurated but positions were available in other states as well. In 1983 the first doctors successfully completed the ACRM training program and were admitted to the College by examination. The graduates at the inaugural Convocation Ceremony on 24 May 1984, which took place at the University of New South Wales, were: G Abbott, H Dickson, J Middleton, B Zeman. This was when the newly designed College gown was worn for the first time.

In July 1984, the National Specialist Qualification Advisory Committee (NSQAC) recognised the ACRM as its Advisory Body on Rehabilitation Medicine, and the FACRM as an acceptable qualification for recognition as a Specialist in Rehabilitation Medicine.

The NSQAC Chairman, J E D Goldie, wrote in his letter to the ACRM dated 27 August 1984: *"I have pleasure in informing you that NSQAC members were unanimous in their decision to accede to your formal request that ACRM be recognised by the Committee of the Advisory Body on Rehabilitation Medicine to NSQAC. Furthermore it was decided that the F.A.C.R.M. be listed as an acceptable qualification for recognition/registration as a Specialist in Rehabilitation Medicine in the next edition (No. 12) of 'List of Recommended Medical Specialties and Appropriate Qualifications' due to be published later this year."*

The annual Adrian Paul Memorial Prize was created in 1986 as a result of a donation of \$2000 from Mrs Nancy Paul the widow of Adrian Paul. Adrian Paul held the position of Coordinator of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for many years.

The cash prize is still awarded annually for the best scientific paper presented at the AFRM Annual Scientific Meeting or for the best published scientific paper in a refereed medical journal.

The Australasian College of Rehabilitation Medicine

Although the first doctors from New Zealand were elected to Fellowship of the ACRM in February 1984 (H Burry, R Wigley, G Arthur, R Howes, W Morris, B Tait and G Perry), it wasn't until February 1989 that the inaugural meeting of the New Zealand Branch was held in Auckland. Then, by special resolution passed at the AGM of the College on 10 April 1990, the name was changed from the Australian College of Rehabilitation Medicine to become the Australasian College of Rehabilitation Medicine. This allowed for the recognition of the specialty of Rehabilitation Medicine in New Zealand.

When the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Medical Education and Medical Workforce, chaired by Professor Ralph Doherty, was released in April 1988, it was noted that disciplines with small numbers of specialists could benefit by coming under the aegis of one of the major colleges. This was the stimulus for discussions to commence in 1989, between the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) and the Australasian College of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) to explore the

A Brief History of the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine.

DRAFT 6

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prospects of incorporating the ACRM into the RACP as a Faculty. The decision to join the RACP was hotly debated amongst the ACRM Fellows and although not a unanimous vote the majority of the Fellows of the ACRM eventually decided in favour of joining the larger organisation.