

Conference and Transition

The recent Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors Biennial Conference held at the Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort in Queensland, provided an excellent opportunity for the profession of rehabilitation counselling to review its progress as a profession, to benchmark Australian practice and research developments to international paradigms, and to showcase emerging issues. Over the three days of the Conference, delegates enjoyed up to 50 presentations on a diverse range of topics covering street smart rehabilitation beyond 2001, work based rehabilitation, indigenous rehabilitation, rehabilitation in rural and remote communities, and community based rehabilitation. Keynote speakers reflected the international focus of the Conference. Professor Richard Roessler from the University of Arkansas, addressed the issue of disability and job retention; Judge Kathleen Satchwell, High Court Judge from the Republic of South Africa, examined the urgent issues surrounding road accidents and rehabilitation in South Africa; Dr Nancy Arnold from the University of Montana, examined a viable system for rural rehabilitation in the United States that has potential for successful implementation in Australia; Dr Donal McAnaney from the National University of Ireland in Dublin, provided an overview of work based rehabilitation practices in several European countries; Dr Tom Seekins from the University of Montana, provided additional models for successful research practices in rural locations; and Professor Catherine Marshall from the University of Northern Arizona examined ethical and professional practice issues in indigenous cultural research.

The ASORC Conferences are now a well established landmark for the profession in Australia and provide a valuable opportunity for the presentation of quality research and professional practice. The 2001 Conference was an important event in the profession's calendar which, in this Editor's opinion, provided an exceptional set of presentations. Congratulations to all organisers and participants who contributed greatly to the success of the Conference.

This issue publishes a set of articles which although diverse, complement several themes of the recent Conference.

Donal McAnaney and his colleagues examine system factors in disability management models of return to work for workers who experience long term absences for health reasons. This paper examines several emerging trends in the management of long term absence (LTA) workers in eight European countries and reviews the effectiveness of such systems. In particular the paper examines the RETURN project which was a transnational study which sought, through cohort tracking, to understand why the dissemination of fundamental rehabilitation principles (such as early intervention, and work-based rehabilitation) was slow to do so in a number of European jurisdictions. The accompanying systems analysis provides a set of valuable data to enable future development of strategies for LTA management.

Following the theme of remote and rural rehabilitation services examined in some scope in papers at the recent ASORC Conference, Amanda Young and her co-authors report a study which aimed at identifying the factors influencing the rehabilitation experience of people living with an amputation in a rural setting. This

qualitative study provides valuable information for the future planning and delivery of services for this population. Recommendations include integration of such services with community development planning processes, the provision and professional preparation of peer-support services, and flexible and responsive meeting of changing service needs. The article provides a direction of where community development and rehabilitation services in particular can jointly manage goals in low resourced rural and remote districts.

An article published in this Journal by Hogan et al. (1999, 5[1], 1–8) examined the employment and economic outcomes for deafened adults with cochlear implants. The authors in this article made the point that the time of onset of deafness is a critical factor in learning processes and, to some extent, the attainment of life goals. Alpass and her colleagues provide a further set of information on late onset hearing loss and a distinction between the physical loss of hearing ability and hearing handicap itself which refers to the disadvantages imposed by an impairment on the individual's psychosocial functioning. This brief report examines such relationships between hearing loss and hearing handicap on a group of New Zealand Army veterans. Although the nature of the study precludes a number of firm conclusions, it does provide some evidence to suggest that aspects of the rehabilitation process are important factors in the individual's experience of hearing handicap. These include proper aid selection and consumer expectation of aid appropriateness and performance, and other non-auditory factors such as general health.

A potential determinant of good health rarely appearing in the disability and rehabilitation literature is the notion of spirituality. Kieren Faull and Tom Kalliath argue in their article that evidence exists that suggests why spirituality could be a primary determinant of health. The authors distinguish spirituality from religion and source from the literature four common themes that comprise a working definition. Arguing a view of spirituality as the only permanent dimension of self, then health should be perceived somewhat differently than just the optimal functioning of the objective dimensions of self such as the physical, social or cognitive. The authors provide guidance for rehabilitation counsellors who are supportive of such an approach by their clients and a rationale for such an approach.

The final article by Roy Chen is instructive and useful for rehabilitation counsellors who may be working with persons who have muscular dystrophy. The article overviews the condition itself and its sequelae, examines employment profiles and reviews a range of holistic interventions. The article should be particularly useful for counsellors who have had limited exposure to persons with muscular dystrophy and offers several useful observations of professional practice.

This Issue is my last as Editor of the Journal as I complete my four-year term and eight issues. I have thoroughly enjoyed the role as Editor and wish to publicly acknowledge the tremendous support I have received from my Associate Editors (Ross Flett and Greg Murphy) and my Consulting Editors (Too numerous to name! See inside cover for details). In addition, I would like to thank Nick Buys as Foundation Editor who passed on the role to me and has been a consistent source of excellent support; David Thomas as Administration Manager without whom the Journal would simply not have made it to the subscribers; Mike Hancock as ASORC Liaison and Editorial Assistant for his unflagging support and professional advice; and lastly Stephen May and his team at Australian Academic Press for invaluable and efficient publication services.

Finally I would like to introduce Dr Ross Flett from Massey University as incoming Editor. Ross has already outlined at our recent Conference some exciting potential developments for the Journal, and has had the opportunity to meet as many ASORC members as could attend the Conference

On behalf of all involved with the Journal, might I again offer my farewell thanks for your support, and extend a very warm welcome to the incoming Editor!

Herbert C. Biggs Ph.D, *Editor*