



RMSANZ

Rehabilitation Medicine Society of Australia and New Zealand

RMSANZ President's Report

The last 12 months have presented the challenges of “living with COVID-19”, to us all personally and professionally. It is an important time to reflect on this journey, and to focus on well-being for the clinicians, patients and support staff in rehabilitation. With the clear public health initiatives in Australia and New Zealand, we are now seeing relaxing of restrictions outside of hospital environments. Understandably, healthcare continues to exercise heightened caution. Similarly, the RMSANZ Board has continued to manage societal finances judiciously.

Membership

Despite these ongoing pressures, it is pleasing to note that RMSANZ has further strengthened membership numbers. October figures demonstrate a total membership of 486, including 364 ordinary members, 97 trainee members, 4 associate members, 20 retired members and 1 honorary member.

Annual Scientific Meetings

The society was delighted to be able to return to in-person Annual Scientific Meeting this year, held in Gold Coast, Queensland. The ASM is a major income stream for RSMANZ, and the profit from the 2022 event has reflected the enthusiasm of our membership to attend these events. Board Director and ASM Convenor, Ben Chen, demonstrated dedicated and expert oversight of the ASM. Agreeing to this role in 2019, pre-COVID, Ben surmounted countless obstacles across 3 years to achieve this amazing success, as well as the strongly attended virtual Snapshots conference in 2021. Thank you to Ben, the local organising committee, DC conferences, all presenters, and the membership. The opportunity to meet face to face reminds us of the importance of collegiality, collaboration and rehabilitation research. We look forward to meeting again in Hobart, in September 2023, and are excited with the program under development by Dr Yan Chow, conference convenor, and her team.

Looking forward, RMSANZ is pleased to announce the upcoming collaboration with International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM) for the Sydney 2024 conference. Prof John Olver will be the Congress President, Dr Lee Laycock is the Chair of the Local Organising Committee, and Prof Steven Faux is the chair of the Scientific Program Committee. RMSANZ has also bid to co-host the WCNR conference in Adelaide 2028, with the bid recently shortlisted. These are exciting times for our society to collaborate and be recognised internationally. Board Director, Fary Khan, has been elected as the next Vice Presidents, ISPRM, and we all pass on our heartfelt congratulations for this wonderful recognition and achievement.

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Australian Competition Tribunal Matter

I would like to briefly outline the significant outcome achieved by the RMSANZ on behalf of our membership in the recent Australian Competition Tribunal matter. Protracted negotiations with buying group Honeysuckle Health (HH) and nib health funds have secured stronger protection for clinical protection and patient care. Last year the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) authorised HH to collectively negotiate and administer contracts with healthcare providers (including hospitals, medical specialists and allied health professionals) on behalf of participants in its buying group. RMSANZ (and PPSIG, its Private Practice Special Interest group), the National Association of Practising Psychiatrists (NAPP), the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and other medical groups provided multiple submissions to the ACCC. The ACCC granted authorisation subject to a condition that major private health insurers be excluded from participation in the buying group and that the period of authorisation be limited to five years, rather than the requested ten years. RMSANZ and NAPP filed review applications with the Australian Competition Tribunal over concerns at how the ACCC's decision would impact on rehabilitation and psychiatric services. Earlier this year, the AMA successfully applied to formally intervene in these review proceedings. I am pleased to tell you that a legally binding agreement has been reached with Honeysuckle Health, which reinforces strong protections for doctors and patients for specialist services, funded by private health insurers who choose to participate in the HH buying group. This agreement maintains strong protections for rehabilitation physicians who do not wish to participate in the HH buying group's BCPP program to continue to be able to use no-gap contracts. These protections are in addition to the conditions already put in place by the ACCC. This means that the authorisation will continue to be limited to five years and will continue to exclude the major health funds. RMSANZ has been at great pains to secure these protections for you, our members, our patients, and our rehabilitation medicine and specialty colleagues. RMSANZ and NAPP were represented by pro bono barristers and solicitors in the proceedings. We are very grateful for their generous efforts on our behalf. Further specifics pertaining to the Deed of Settlement are available on the RMSANZ website. Prof Steven Faux dedicated countless hours to this endeavour, and his passion and efforts have assisted in securing this outcome – thank you to Steven.

BiNational Rehabilitation Strategy

I am delighted to report an important collaboration with Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRM) and Australasian Rehabilitation Outcomes Centre (AROC) to commence work on a BiNational Rehabilitation Strategy. A previous version of an Australian Rehabilitation Strategy, 2011, became hamstrung at draft stage. A New Zealand strategy, 2014, was finalised but achieved limited political traction. Key drivers for a renewed strategy include considerations of the position of Rehabilitation Medicine in the broader health and disability context, the role of the future Rehabilitation Medicine trainee and fellow, and the importance of advocating for our profession at the highest levels. Support from the AFRM Policy and Advocacy Committee is pending formal Faculty board approval, with significant

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background work on a scoping document underway. Once formalised, the Co-Chairs will distribute a formal EOI for membership to be involved in this most important working party. Co-Chairs will be Professor Chris Poulos, representing RMSANZ, and Prof Maria Crotty, representing AFRM and AROC. Once preliminary work is underway, involvement of broader stakeholders will commence. I am keen for a diverse representation on the working party, and encourage you all to consider nominating for involvement in this once-in-a-career opportunity.

Board Subcommittees

The Finance Committee is chaired by Treasurer, Ben Chen. The full financial report is available separately for your reference.

Alex Ganora chairs the Governance Committee and, as always, has acted tirelessly to ensure compliance with RMSANZ's constitution and governance best practice as required. His encyclopaedic knowledge and level-headed approach are valued by all.

Communication Committee, chaired by David Murphy, is working on establishing an RMSANZ information pack to be included in information for new AFRM Fellows and Trainees. In addition, enhanced focus on the society website and social media remains an ongoing focus. As David completes his term on this Board, the Communications Committee will be appointing a new Chair in the coming weeks. We thank David for his involvement and commitment over the years.

The RMSANZ Scientific Committee, chaired by Ian Cameron, plays a prominent role in the development of content for the ASM. Work is underway to dovetail this committee with the newly formed AFRM Academic Research Committee. Whilst unable to formally amalgamate, the Chairs acknowledge joint interests, and anticipate significant dual representation in membership. As such, review of Terms of Reference to ensure complimentary activity is underway, with an aim to hold meetings consecutively with aligned purpose and efficiency.

Advisory Council, Branches and Special Interest Group (SIG)s

An important focus of the current Directors is to enhance Board responsiveness and impact for its members. As such, re-invigoration of Advisory Council role and reporting has occurred, encouraging true two-way sharing of information between Board and membership. Formalisation of Branch and SIG reporting templates have assisted in clear and consistent communication. Branch ASMs are encouraged, and these meetings promote trainee research presentations. Following promotion by the Advisory Council, RMSANZ has resolved to provide each Branch ASM with an annual trainee prize allowance to promote research and activity. Branch and SIG representation on the Advisory Council is a key element in achieving this line of communication, and thanks to all of the members of the Council for the role they play.

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Branches and SIG meeting attendance continues to be impacted by the limitations of COVID-19, though emergence of increased activities can now be appreciated. RMSANZ SIGs include Private Practice, Disaster Rehabilitation, P&O, NeuroRehabilitation and Pain/MSK in addition to the Botulinum Toxin Expert Working Group.

The Private Practice SIG (Chair Stephanie Lam) must be acknowledged for their key role in the achieving the deed as mentioned above, an important concession from Honeysuckle / nib to protect rehabilitation options for patients. In addition to this, the PPSIG has held 6 introductory workshops on private practice for new rehabilitation physicians, with workshops on Honeysuckle Health, the audit process, and the impact of bundled payments. The PPSIG continues to support a very active membership.

The Disaster Rehabilitation SIG (Chair Sumitha Gounden) meets second monthly, and has been active in several important initiatives. They maintain a registry over 70 rehabilitation doctors prepared to deploy to help in disaster relief situations. The SIG is also establishing a registry of patients with disability living in high risk areas, such as those prone to flooding or bushfire. Development of a document to accompany evacuation orders is in process, with the aim of providing guidance in the form a checklist for evacuation centres to consider needs of victims with disability.

The P&O SIG (Chair Michael Chou) formed a new SIG committee at the Gold Coast ASM, and are in the planning phase for an upcoming webinar series.

The Pain SIG has recently updated its name to / MSK SIG to more accurately reflect its purpose. The SIG (Chair Chiaki Kojima) provided a successful workshop on Return to work workshop at the 2022 ASM, and is planning a pre-conference workshop for the 2023 ASM. A MSK workshop will be offered in March 2023. There are planned education sessions on Opioid Stewardship in December, and Pain, Language and Communication in March 2023.

The NeuroRehabilitation SIG (Chair Roslyn Avery) has re-established regular meetings in the wake of the pandemic. Work is underway to promote growth of SIG future directions, to undertake education sessions and to establish a regular Journal Club in 2023.

Despite the challenges of COVID, the BTEWP (Chair Stephen de Graaff) have successfully run two interactive workshops. A Level I workshop was held on 11 June 2022, with presentations and demonstrations by Saul Geffen, Warren Jennings-Bell, Stephen de Graaff and John Estelle. A Level II workshop was facilitated by John Olver, Barry Rawicki and Stephen de Graaff. Both workshops received excellent feedback. The BTEWP continues to finalise a Position Statement, with target publication in the Internal Medicine Journal. Upcoming activities for 2023 include further Level I and II workshops at the RMSANZ ASM in Hobart, development of

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a second monthly Journal Club, ongoing sponsor relationship building, and consideration of development of an independent SIG.

Position Statements and advocacy

RMSANZ continues to value Position Statements to support and advocate for the role of Rehabilitation Medicine in clinical practice. There are currently two Position Statements in progress, with some limitation of advancement noted in the context of COVID-19. Dr Lee Laycock is chairing a working party to produce a Position Statement on rehabilitation medicine management of people with deconditioning & debility. I am currently chairing a working party to establish a Position Statement on Role of the Rehabilitation Physician in Ambulatory Care. The society has commissioned a formal literature review to provide evidence base for this position statement. The final version of the literature review is anticipated in the coming weeks.

Thanks go to Dr Sumitha Gounden, chair of the working party that has successfully produced and finalised the RMSANZ Position Statement on the Role of Rehabilitation Medicine Physicians in the management of COVID-19 patients. Dr Gounden and Prof Faux are currently drafting an RMSANZ submission to the Parliamentary enquiry into Long COVID.

In collaboration with Medibank Private, the RMSANZ is in the final stages of development of model of care for private rehabilitation in the home services. Recommendations from this collaboration include high level advocacy to encourage federal government to clarify legislation as it relates to the provision of rehabilitation in the home for privately insured patients. Initial meetings are currently in the planning phase. Thank you to members of the working party.

Summary

I would like to acknowledge and thank my fellow Directors: I thank them for their commitment and their guidance: thank you to Alex Ganora, Richard Seeman, Steven Faux, Fary Khan, Ben Chen, Sumitha Gounden. I would like to especially recognise the contributions of Directors David Murphy, Lee Laycock and Michael Chou as they complete their terms with the Board in 2022. These Directors have collectively volunteered 16 years of Board service. Dr Lee Laycock has been a Director since 2015, and completed a two year term as President from 2017-2019. Dr Michael Chou followed as President from 2019-2021, and has also contributed to the Board since 2015. Dr David Murphy has completed 4 years as a Director. On behalf of the Society, your colleagues and your profession, thank you. We look forward to formally welcoming our new Board members and to working together for our members of the coming term.

While we are saying farewell to these directors we are welcoming new directors Ann Winkler, Brian Zeman and Kelly Dungey.

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In addition to our Directors, sincere appreciation of the tireless work of our Company Secretary, John Lemon, and our Administrative Officer, Alex Petersen. Thank you.

And finally, to our members. The Society exists to support the needs of our profession and our members. As a Board we need to ensure we appropriately represent the membership, and have initiated an annual Board survey to reflect and commit to ongoing and responsive improvement in our performance.

Wishing each and every one a healthy, successful and rewarding year ahead.

Assoc Prof Zoe Adey Wakeling

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