University of Otago
Rehabilitation and Disability Research Theme
Annual Report 2007

1. Theme Mission

The Rehabilitation and Disability Research Theme represents a collaborative effort by researchers from diverse backgrounds to conduct high quality research that will enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitative care and optimise quality of life for persons with injury and disabilities, including those musculoskeletal, neurological, and chronic health conditions that may lead to impairment and/or disability.

We undertake research that will improve the quality, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness of patient care and outcomes. This includes investigations focusing on the prevention, reduction and resolution of disability, as well as quality of life for those affected by injury or disability, and the quality of life of their families and carers. Work in this area is based upon applied research that utilises modern technology to maximise human performance, and facilitate the process of adaptation to disability; research that improves understanding of the determinants of adaptive human performance and disability within the context of impairment and/or disability; as well as investigations into the accessibility and effectiveness of patient/family education and community outreach programs. The Rehabilitation and Disability Research Theme will provide research training in a variety of specialties, including rehabilitation, neuroscience, neuropsychology, biomechanics, health care outcomes, rehabilitation engineering, and other related fields.

2. Theme Personnel

Active Management Group

Chair: Professor David Baxter, School of Physiotherapy

Members: Dr Stephan Milosavljevic, School of Physiotherapy
Dr Sarah Dean, Rehabilitation Teaching and Research Unit
Dr Sarah Derrett, Injury Prevention Research Unit
Dr Linda Wilson, Occupational Therapy, Otago Polytechnic
Julian Verkaaik, Burwood Academy for Independent Living
Associate Professor Anne Bray, Donald Beasley Institute (added later in the year)

Theme Members (kept informed, but don't attend meetings)

Members: Professor John Langley, Injury Prevention Research Unit
Dr Peter Davidson, Preventive and Social Medicine
Professor John Campbell, Geriatric Medicine, Dunedin Medical and Surgical Sciences
Lynda McCutcheon, Otago District Health Board
Dr Linda Robertson, Occupational Therapy, Otago Polytechnic
Associate Professor Richard Siegert, Rehabilitation Teaching and Research Unit (no longer a member)

Theme Administration

Emma Tumilty, School of Physiotherapy

3. Objectives for 2007

1. Establishment of Website and development of relevant marketing materials
   The Theme produced a website (www.rehabotago.net) and produced conference bags at the Research Colloquium held in December 2007 to promote itself.
2. Submission of external funding bids (>3) under the auspices of the research theme
   The Theme in conjunction with Enterprise staff submitted a "ACC Capabilities" document to the ACC. Members of the Theme also collaborated on HRC grants and a Disability Placement Programme Scholarship. Members of the theme successfully submitted an Expression of Interest for the ACC NIDMAR programme tender released at the end of last year and they will be asked submit full proposals over the coming months.
3. Organisation of x2 networking meetings (Wellington & Christchurch)
   Meetings were held in Wellington & Christchurch, which incorporated a Management group meeting, with presentations and discussion sessions spread over each day. These meetings included relevant theme members, as well as local academics, postgraduate students, etc. Various external organisations were also invited and a member of the ACC attended.
4. Organisation of Themes Annual Conference, Dunedin, November/December 2007

The Rehabilitation and Disability Research Theme Colloquium was held on 29th/30th November at the School of Physiotherapy. The schedule ran over 1½ days and included invited speakers, as well as local academic and postgraduate presentations. The colloquium was well attended (>60; previous year around 30) and attendees included both academics and students from the university and polytechnics, as well as attendees from ACC, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and various local organisations involved in rehabilitation and disability.

4. Theme / Centre Activities during 2007

- Research accomplishments
  The Theme 4 small research awards ($2000 each) to applicants for projects to aid funding applications and collaborations in future (Appendix 1)
- Postgraduate activities
  Students associated with the Theme presented at the all three meetings throughout the year. One student received an HRC Disability Placement Programme Scholarship, which was applied for by the student and by Prof. Baxter for the corresponding Team application as Chair of the Theme Management Group.
- Postgraduate and postdoctoral support (eg Conference supplements)
  One doctoral student has received an ACC Postdoctoral scholarship through the support of two members of the Management Committee.
- Links & collaborations including communication with other groups
  The Theme has been in contact with ACC throughout the year (partly through the Research Office) and by inviting members to attend the larger meetings (representatives attended the Wellington and Dunedin meeting). Collaborations between the group have increased with a greater relationship between the University and Burwood Academy for Independent Living and Otago Polytechnic. Plans are underway to collaborate more closely with the Donald Beasley Institute's regular monthly disability research seminars.
- Visitors & seminars
  The annual colloquium had three invited speakers: Dr Margo Patterson, Queen's University Canada; Dr Keith Rome, Auckland University; Shari Mason and Denise Brown, Statistics New Zealand. At both the small meeting days held in Wellington and Christchurch seminars/presentations were arranged after the management group meeting, these included discussion rounds and student/academic presentations.
- Public lectures
  The colloquium was open to the public and invitations were sent out to the wider allied health professionals community, as well as government agencies, community groups and the university and polytechnic.
- Theme meetings
  The Theme Management Group met six times throughout the year (once each in Wellington and Christchurch and four times in Dunedin with the help of teleconferencing).

5. Activity related expenditure during 2007

	Item	Actual	Budgeted	Variance
1	Website	2500	2000	500
2	Research Administrator	5000	5000	0
3	Grant Preparation	8000	13000	-5000
4	Networking Meetings	1427.45	2000	-572.55
5	Research Conference	7012	3000	4012
	TOTAL	23939	25000	1061

Appendix 1

- Dr Xiangu Xiong, Karen Marshall, Dr Leanne Parker, Burwood Spinal Unit

  "Burwood Spinal Unit patient outcomes for patients with ventilator dependent tetraplegia."

- **Ms Joanne Nunnerly, Dr Jean Hay-Smith, Dr Sarah Dean, RTRU**

  "The experience of leaving a spinal injury unit in New Zealand"

- **Dr Leigh Hale (School of Physiotherapy)**, **Dr Sarah Dean, (RTRU)**, Dr Jeremy Hobart (Peninsula Medical School, UK), Prof. Janet Mulcare (Independent Researcher), **Assoc. Prof. Glenn Buchan (Department of Microbiology)**, **Andrew Gray (Dept. Preventive and Social Medicine)**, Dr L. J. du Plessis, (Dept of Neurology, ODHB).

  "Can exercise reduce the impact of multiple sclerosis has on daily life?"

- **Meredith Perry (School of Physiotherapy), Dr Sarah Dean (RTRU), Dr Leigh Hale (School of Physiotherapy), Prof. David Baxter (School of Physiotherapy)**

  "Perceptions of physical activity limitations in people with low back pain"

(University of Otago staff in bold)