

Editorial for the special edition of the South African Journal of Physiotherapy to celebrate the Physiotherapy Department of the University of the Witwatersrand's 75th Anniversary.

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The Physiotherapy Department of the University of the Witwatersrand was established in 1938 and offered a three year diploma in physiotherapy. With the foresight of Professor Raymond Dart a four-year BSc (Physiotherapy) degree was established in 1943 making this the oldest degree programme in physiotherapy in the country. As we celebrate 75 years of the department and 70 years of our degree programme this special edition showcases some of our research. Most of the published studies in this edition are from masters students with two studies that contributed towards PhD's.

Today the department is thriving and lively with all staff actively engaged in research, teaching both undergraduate and post graduate students and supervision of post graduate students' research. All the staff either have or are engaged in studying for higher degrees. We currently have six full-time staff with PhD's; three sessional staff with PhD's; seven at various stages of their PhD's (from early protocol development to awaiting examiners' reports!) and one completing a master's degree. They teach their specialties from first year to a post graduate level and supervise both masters and doctoral studies. This balance between teaching and research means that we are part of developing the evidence from which we teach and ensures that everyone on the staff has the opportunity to become a recognised researcher and teacher within their specific field.

Our teaching and research is deliberately focussed on the health needs of the South African population,

particularly those in the public health-care system, and by doing so we hope to ensure our continued relevance in the efforts to improve the health of our population. As such much of the research that we have done is in the management of chronic disease including HIV. Not surprisingly our results show yet again the importance of exercise and education as the basis of many of our interventions. In the early days the physiotherapy course consisted mostly of exercise and over the years went through various changes but now again it is clearer than ever that our profession is based on exercise and we are truly "movement and exercise specialists"! The most important difference between those early years and now is that we now have the evidence of what works and more importantly some evidence of what does not.

We publish in a variety of local and international journals and make a concerted effort to attend appropriate congresses so that staff have the opportunity to develop and collaborate with international experts. These efforts have been underpinned by applying for and being awarded a number of research grants to support these activities and also to give staff the opportunity to visit international units within their fields.

Our post graduate programme has grown enormously and we now regularly have more than 60 students on the programme at any one time. We have also experienced an increase in both PhD and masters' degrees by research which has been most satisfying and are attracting students from numerous institutions locally,

from the rest of Africa and a few from outside Africa.

We cannot afford to rest on our laurels as we pause for a moment to celebrate. We need to continually strive to be better: to ensure a relevant undergraduate programme based on the best available evidence; to contribute to the development of local appropriate evidence; to have an active vibrant post graduate programme; to publish regularly; to increasingly be involved in large well-funded studies; to develop internationally recognised researchers and to ensure that our findings are included into clinical practice and service delivery. There is much still to be done so that by the time we celebrate our centenary we can look back with pride on a department that truly fulfils its obligations of a university, that is: the acquisition of knowledge, the creation of knowledge and the application of knowledge!

This edition is dedicated to our patients in the clinical settings the current, past and future staff and undergraduate and post graduate students of our department who have worked and continue to work so hard and with so much enthusiasm. It has been a tough journey to get to where we are but well worth it.

We also wish to thank the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic's office, the Postgraduate and Research office and the Dean's office of the Faculty of Health Sciences as well as the support received from the Head of the School of Therapeutic sciences for making the publication of this special edition of the South African Journal of Physiotherapy possible.