

NCPO Hosts ISPO Australia Conference

The 2003 Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics, Australian National Member Society, was held from 27-29th November. The meeting was hosted by the NCPO and held at La Trobe University.

The event was a tremendous success and was attended by 160 local, interstate and international delegates and featured a combination of podium presentations, tele presentations workshops, poster presentations and trade exhibits.

The keynote speaker was Professor Charles Radcliffe, Professor Emeritus, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of California Berkley who delivered his key address on

“Biomechanics of Lower Extremity Socket Fitting”. Other major presentation themes included Pediatrics, P&O education and Outreach, Professional Development, and Stance Phase Orthoses as well as an instructional workshop on fitting and alignment of a Four-Bar knee.

A further highlight of the meeting was the conference banquet held at Yering Station, where delegates enjoyed fine jazz, food and wine, and welcomed the chance to socialise and discuss the content of the presentations.

The George Carter New Investigator Prize was presented to NCPO Honours student Monique van den Boom for her paper “The Effect of Metatarsal Pad Height on Peak Pressure and Comfort in Asymptomatic Subjects”. The paper was co-authored by Rod Cooper and Margaret Hodge.

The award for the best poster presentation was given to Katherine Harding and Leigh Taylor for their poster titled “Development of a Rehabilitation Service in the Republic of the Marshall Islands”.

The recipients of the Best Short Paper Presentation were Anneke Deutsch and David Butler for their poster titled “New Polycentric Knee Joints for a Van Ness Rotationplasty Prosthesis”.

Conference convenor Dr Tim Bach and his organizing committee are to be congratulated upon hosting a world class meeting.

ISPO ASM delegates and guests enjoyed the beautiful view, superb wine and delicious food at Yering Station, venue of the conference banquet.



Annual Planning Day for the NCPO

At the conclusion of each academic year, staff of the NCPO meet to evaluate the department's activities, discuss teaching innovations, allocate responsibilities, and set goals for the coming year. The meeting to evaluate 2003 and plan for 2004 was held in late November, with the department highlighting continued promotion and recruitment of international students, review of assessment techniques and course continuity, and facilitation of research productivity as some of its major goals for 2004. New portfolios were formalized within the department to ensure a dedicated commitment to fulfilling these objectives along with allocations of responsibilities such as subject and year level co ordination. The tremendous workloads shouldered by NCPO staff with limited staffing resources were again evident from the

large number of responsibilities allocated to each staff member. Despite this, a large number of successful outcomes for 2003 were noted and staff remain passionate in our goals of establishing the NCPO as a world leader in prosthetic and orthotic education and research. A number of smaller planning meetings will also be held over the coming months to address issues raised and prepare the department for the 2005 teaching year.

Further information on the NCPO's activities is available in the NCPO 2003 Annual Report. For a copy of the report or further information please contact Mr. Rod Cooper, Head NCPO on phone: 03 9479 5862 or email: rod.cooper@latrobe.edu.au

Curriculum Corner

Detail about the P&O curriculum can be found in the 'Course outline and subject descriptions' section on the NCPO homepage: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ncpo/>

Review of Assessment Tasks

During 2002-03, NCPO staff reviewed all assessment requirements for all subjects, to check that the assessment load was appropriate for the number of contact hours and credit points. Minor changes were made within some subjects as result of this exercise.

In addition to assessing student ability within a subject area, assessment tasks are used to develop skills such as literature analysis, writing ability, oral communication and time management. Such skill development requires an appropriate mix of assessment tasks throughout the course. Review of the balance of assessment tasks between subjects, for each year level in each semester, was undertaken at the end of 2003. Changes to balance the variety of tasks and minimise end of semester stress for students were identified. These included additional problem-solving exercises, the staggering of due dates, fewer oral presentations and the introduction of different types of written tasks and presentations. Implementation of the revised assessment tasks will continue during 2004.

Thanks to all Volunteer Patients, Sessional Staff and Clinical Supervisors

We wish to say a very sincere thanks to all volunteer patients who so generously donated their time to assist our students receive the best possible learning experience again this year. It is through the dedication and commitment of these volunteers that our students are able to receive the high level of clinical 'hands on' experience that is essential throughout the course.

We would also like to thank the many sessional staff that delivered lectures and practical teaching to our students this year. Students regularly note this involvement by external practitioners as being a highlight of many of their subjects.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the tremendous work done again this year by Clinical Supervisors in facilitating and supervising student clinical placements.

Staff of the NCPO would like to wish you all a safe and prosperous 2004. Once again, we say thank you.

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Research in Gujarat, India



Handicap International staff from Gujarat working with an amputee patient

In mid-2003, the NCPO received a request for assistance in preparing and administering a training program for staff at Handicap International (HI) in India. HI wanted to evaluate the quality of prosthetics services provided following the earthquake in January 2001, and in doing so, achieve gains in the capacity of their staff to undertake research of this type independently.

Wes Pryor, an Associate Lecturer and PhD Student at the NCPO spent one month working with HI in Gujarat and in Delhi. The project involved training HI staff in research skills, and then completing pilot work in the field. This pilot work examined the factors that influenced compliance, satisfaction and function in 9 amputees from Gujarat.

Since Wes departed, the local staff from HI have completed 89 comprehensive surveys. Working with Wes, they hope to better understand the effects of the services they and others provided following the earthquake. From early evaluations of the field data, it is clear that there are considerable limitations in the clinical and technical services provided, compounded by the limited gait training and social support provided. These simple findings should be used in future management decisions in Gujarat and other regions with similar requirements. More detailed results of this research have been or will be presented at both Australian and international P&O conferences, including the ISPO ASM.

It is hoped that this work will allow India's P&O professionals to better understand the quality of their P&O services, and perhaps to implement prospective studies to move towards evidence based practice, even in the difficult circumstances of a post natural disaster region. This is another example of the NCPOs increasing international profile as a quality provider of research and research training in P&O and amputee rehabilitation.