

## In Our Hands 100 years of Physiotherapy at Otago 1913-2013

Louise Shaw 2013, University of Otago School of Physiotherapy, Dunedin, New Zealand. ISBN 978-0-473-23850-6. Hard covered, 146 pages. RRP: \$45.00

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In the fast moving world of today, there is a tendency to feel that history is irrelevant, but "The farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see" (Winston Churchill). "In our hands" is an in depth history of physiotherapy at Otago and the New Zealand School of Physiotherapy by historian Louise Shaw. It holds the reader's interest from the photograph on the front cover, entitled 'The Humerus' (1952) to group photographs of students and staff at the University of Otago in 2012.

How did we progress from 'a halo of mystery' using massage, magnetism and medical electricity to 'care and alleviate' abnormal conditions of the body into fitness and preventative work 'based on regular exercise and correct breathing techniques' to the evidence based practice of today including preventive education and rehabilitation, and encompassing non-communicable diseases? Who are the many personalities who led the way in the development of the profession as it became based on science rather than belief? What were the key elements of a rigorous education which led to professional registration and legitimising of the profession? What is balneology? When and how did the word 'physiotherapy' become recognised?

Many of us have been under the impression that our education was based on that of Schools of Physiotherapy in England, but the Otago School of Physiotherapy was modelled on Australia's first formal education programme in massage therapy. This had been established in Melbourne in 1906 and included both university teaching and hospital based training. It was a more rigorous education programme than that of our British colleagues at the time. There were also influences from Sweden, Germany and later England and the United States. It was only under Miss ML Roberts that the curriculum was brought more in line with that of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics of Great Britain and full reciprocity was established after the Second World War.

Our training began within the University of Otago, was moved to the auspices of the Otago Hospital Board, the Otago Polytechnic and then back to the University of Otago where it continues to grow and develop and maintain its international reputation but its passage, from 1913, has not been uneventful. Throughout its time the profession has been closely aligned to the medical profession and this has facilitated the growth and development of physiotherapy from a 12-month certificated profession allied to medicine to a four-year degree programme and an autonomous profession with higher degree opportunities. Only occasionally were there elements within the medical profession keen to limit competition.

Louise Shaw has covered a century in time and brought together a wealth of information from innumerable sources,

carefully and clearly referenced. Each chapter is interspersed with generic images e.g. The first ideal quality of a masseuse, taken from the Nursing Times 5 April 1913, and published on page 35 reads: "... and the perfect hand for massage should be soft, dry, smooth, and somewhat plump and warm, a hand which inspires confidence at its first touch..". The material is beautifully presented and an enjoyable and engaging read for physiotherapists (undergraduate and postgraduate), our medical colleagues and others with even the smallest interest in where we came from. It is a recommended addition to all medical libraries and for many personal libraries – once in the hand, it cannot be put down.

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