HISTORY OF THE SECTION ON PEDIATRICS: IN CELEBRATION OF THE SECTION'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Through the visionary leadership of Bud DeHaven, the Section on Pediatrics was officially recognized by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) House of Delegates in 1973 - 30 years ago. Since that time, the Section membership and its leaders have remained committed to bringing together pediatric physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in order to promote professional growth, maintain a strong collegial network, and remain strong advocates for children with special needs.

Leadership

Section members have played significant roles in district, state, section, and national leadership over the past 30 years and have clearly identified to the profession the role physical therapists play in providing services to children. Beyond leadership within our Section, many leaders have assumed leadership within the APTA at both national and state levels, as well as within the Foundation for Physical Therapy. Those roles have extended to include leadership in the Special Olympics, state boards, and state departments of education. Members also have assumed consultant roles throughout the country in areas of health, wellness, and injury prevention, as well as physical therapy services to children with special needs.

Education Focus

The Section has participated in the recognition of the advancement of the profession. A major accomplishment of the Section was development of the process for specialty certification. This development required more than 10 years of volunteer work before the first pediatric therapists sat for the exam in 1986. Today, the Pediatric Specialty Council oversees the certification and recertification of pediatric therapists. Over the past 18 years, there have been more than 500 physical therapists that have been recognized as Pediatric Clinical Specialists (PCS).

Educational programming at both the Combined Sections Meeting (CSM) and at APTA's Annual Conference now have tracts that focus on all areas of pediatric practice, as well as health and wellness issues in children. Educators within our Section have been recognized and received training grant support from MCH and the Department of Education to further enhance the education of pediatric physical therapists and the services they provide.

Educational dissemination and communication with members first began with *The Totline*, the Section's first newsletter. *The Totline* became the *Section on Pediatrics Newsletter*, which is sent to all members and is available on the Section's Web site. As members requested more scientific information, the Section took on the major task of starting a professional journal. Fifteen years ago, the Section published the first issue of the *Pediatric Physical Therapy Journal*, which is today a leading pediatric journal that also is available online. In the last few years, the Section has developed a Web site that provides up-to-date information to members regarding current and future conferences, current legislative and critical issues within the field, leadership concerns, and links to APTA and other pertinent Web sites. The Section also has developed a pediatric listserve, which facilitates ongoing communication among membership regarding professional issues.

Providing educational opportunities to members has been a service provided by the Section since its initiation. In the late 1970s, the Section offered the first pre-conference as part of the CSM educational program. Today, this is an ongoing activity at CSM. Regional educational programs also have been developed providing learning opportunities for members who find it difficult to

attend national meetings. A lending library of audiovisual material also is available to therapists across the country. In 1998 a conference on developing expertise in pediatrics was developed. This continues to be a review course for those interested in sitting for the specialty exam. The Section, in collaboration with the Neurology Section, developed the historic II STEP conference in 1990. Currently, both sections are in the advanced stages of development of a III STEP conference to be held as early as 2004.

Legislative Focus

The Section has been very active in monitoring the rights of all children to receive a free and public education, including physical therapy service. From the development of public law 94-142 (1975), to threats of weakening IDEA (1997), to ongoing issues of federal funding, the Section members have tirelessly given their time and money (dues and donations) to ensure that physical therapy remains an integral part of the educational environment. Over the years, many Section members have been active participants in federal and state legislative efforts that affect children. Section members have worked closely with APTA leadership to make sure pediatric legislative issues remain as a high priority to the profession.

Research

Section members have taken an active role in addressing the need for research in the area of pediatric physical therapy. In 1982, the Section's Research Committee was formed to promote pediatric research within the profession. Poster and platform presentations on pediatric topics were initiated at CSM and grants were made available to Section members, including graduate students, to fund pediatric research. Annual research roundtable discussions occur at CSM, and the Section annually recognizes individuals who have shown outstanding work in research, including thesis and dissertation activity.

In 1995, the Section initiated the endowed Pediatric Fund to support clinical research in pediatric physical therapy. This fund, which is administered by the Foundation, now has more than $90,000 and strongly supports the concept of efficacy within all practice settings where pediatric therapists might assume a role. In 2001, the Section made a large contribution to the Foundation to support a multi-site research project that investigates efficacy of a specific practice issue across many physical therapy practice patterns with individuals of all ages. Not only has the Section supported research, there have been many outstanding researchers within our Section. These members have received research funding from the Foundation, NIH, and other grant sources that have given recognition to outstanding contributors to the profession of pediatric physical therapy.

Although the history of the Section on Pediatrics is rich with accomplishments, awards, and growth, the true history is held in the hearts of the membership. The vision of Bud DeHaven was that of an individual who loved the profession and did not see his involvement in the Section or the profession as a responsibility. He saw this involvement as a part of life, growth, learning, and evolution with friends and colleagues that would only be limited by the vision of the membership. The membership is what makes the Section, and the joy we all have in sharing our 30th Anniversary comes from the friendship and laughter we share every time we come together. No doubt the history of the Section will continue to evolve in depth and breadth as will the membership and the leadership they select.

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