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EDITORIAL

ARE YOU A READER?

This issue is addressed principally to the subject of education. Prof. Beenhakker discusses the relevance of physiotherapy education in our mixed first and third world society. The other articles deal with the examining and testing of students. Nowhere is the importance of reading emphasized.

In order to put our profession on a more scientific basis, we need to implement more research. But even if this is done, what happens to the results of the research? Are the results of published research being put to practical use? The developed countries have a fair amount of on-going research which is published regularly in the various physiotherapy journals. Does journal reading form a compulsory area of university programmes? "If educational programmes fail to emphasize the importance of research, fail to put research in perspective by providing case examples that demonstrate the utility of research, and neglect to provide a faculty whose members aspire to be examples of researchers and research utilizers, they do little to engender a fondness for research among students. Unless such a fondness is fostered, students may be inhibited from becoming practitioners who feel comfortable with research utilisation"¹

Very little recent work is to be found in the average physiotherapy textbook. All textbooks are at least three years out of date when newly published. Even those books with extensive bibliographies may be out of date. A reputable journal is the best source for the most recent work. And not only physiotherapy journals. A great many articles on research in physiotherapy can be found in various medical journals.

Assuming that an interest in research and reading is cultivated in the teaching programmes, what happens after graduation? When no actual demand is placed on the

practitioner to stay abreast of recent work, does she rely on what was taught at university, on colleague's experience and on what she hears on ward rounds? This is no way to develop an expertise.

Physiotherapists working at the large academic hospitals have the advantage of a readily available medical school library. Other physiotherapists who live in a city which has a medical school may make use of the library. They may also be allowed to become a subscriber. If you live in a town without a medical school, it is possible, by means of the inter-library loan department of the local municipal library, to borrow books or obtain photostat copies of articles you wish to read.

There is no excuse for not reading. It is the only way of keeping up to date with your profession. And the more you read, the more you find to read. Who knows, it might even stimulate you to write as well. And that is the essence of a scientific practitioner.

Reference

1. Bohannon RW and Le Veau B. Clinician's use of research findings. A review of literature with implications for physical therapists. *Phys Ther* 1986; 66(1): 45-50.

L. M. Davids

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