

Editorial

In this issue, I'm pleased to be able to present a guest editorial written by Dr Bert Biggs. Dr Biggs has recently returned from some northern hemisphere rehabilitation consultancy work which was based in Dublin, Ireland. I felt that it would be of interest to the primarily Australasian readership of the journal to get his perspective on aspects of the rehabilitation scene over there. You will note in this issue of the journal there is a predominance of papers on traumatic brain injury. This was not intentional in the sense of being a "special issue" of the journal but simply reflected the content of many of the submissions for publication in recent times and is perhaps a key theme in current rehabilitation research.

Ross Flett PhD, *Editor*

Guest Editorial

Possible Reforms to Rehabilitation Practice in Ireland

A recent period of residence in Ireland has given the author a contemporary oversight of challenges for rehabilitation professionals in the Irish context. But in the author's view, significant change may not be far away.

The most immediate difference between the Irish jurisdiction and those more familiar to readers in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, is that there is no automatic right for injured persons to access medical and rehabilitation services following a workplace accident or a vehicle injury. In the case of workplace accidents, the injured worker's usual route to services and compensation is through the courts system on proof of employer fault or cause, and where 5-year delays on settlement are not uncommon. A partial compensation advance is not available and this reduces opportunities for gains through early intervention and creates significant challenges for rehabilitation professionals. Access to purchase needed rehabilitation services to persons injured in motor vehicle accidents are similarly available only through court processes. In both cases lump sum payouts are typically the end result of successful litigation and such settlements come from one or more of a pool of private insurers who assume the risk for workers and motorists.

The consequences of such processes encourage poor rehabilitation gains, inasmuch as injured workers are encouraged to retain the full extent of physical and psychological damage incurred at accident throughout the process of litigation in order to maximise any eventual financial settlement. Settlements are also variable in nature where the extent of damage is determined judicially without the benefit of any standardised process for calculation of loss. There is also limited recourse for any