Physiotherapy Specialisation

Glenn Ruscoe
Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist
What is Specialisation?

- Clinical version of a PhD
- Fellowship of the Australian College of Physiotherapists
  - Also Fellowship by Monograph
What is a Specialist?

- Attained the highest level of expertise in their particular field of physiotherapy via a rigorous training and examination process
  - Contribute to the professional education of colleagues
  - Actively engage in their own professional development
  - Has had involvement in research activities
Why did I become a Specialist?

- To learn all that I could
When did I decide to become a Specialist?

- 1990
- 25th September
- 10.30am
- APA (WA Branch) State Conference
- Mulligan’s MWM and SNAG’s
The body within the APA that is ultimately responsible for
- setting the standards and criteria for specialisation, and
- administering the clinical examinations

Only members of the College have the right to use the words ‘Specialist Physiotherapist’
Types of Specialisation

- Cardiorespiratory
- Continence & Women’s Health
- Gerontology
- Musculoskeletal
- Neurology
- Occupational health
- Paediatrics
- Sports
Specialisation Process

1. Graduate
2. Titling
3. Specialisation
1) Graduate

- Physiotherapy qualification
- Join APA
- Join clinical interest group as a Level 1 member
- Undertake professional development activities
2) Titling

a) Academic Pathway, or
b) Experiential Pathway
a) Academic Pathway

- Successful completion of an approved Masters course
- At least 2 years clinical experience in physiotherapy, with evidence of working in the relevant field
b) Experiential Pathway

- 5 years clinical/practical experience, with evidence of a period of at least 3 years in the relevant discipline area.
- Evidence of having engaged in a variety of programs of education to advance their knowledge in the relevant field of physiotherapy
- Written examination/Portfolio submission & Practical Examination/Viva
3) Specialisation

- Two-year training program which includes clinical experience and facilitated clinical development to attain an advanced level of clinical practice
- Evidence of a commitment to education and active participation in a research activity
- Final clinical and oral examinations
Alternative Pathway

- Clinical Doctorate
- Final clinical and oral examinations
Specialisation and the Profession

- Over 20 000 physiotherapists
- Approximately 100 Specialists
Costs

- Masters
- Specialisation $12,000
Benefits

- Self-actualization
- Better treatment outcomes
- Recognition of expertise
- New opportunities
- Collegiate relationship
- Reward
Specialisation and the Future

- **Registration**
- **Differential insurance rates**
  - Private Health Insurance
  - Third Party Insurance
- **Medicare recognition**
  - Medical Specialist Referrals
  - Diagnostic Imaging, eg, NR type X-rays, CT, Ultrasound, MRI
What is Fellowship? - President

- As a qualification conferred upon the recipient following detailed peer assessment it represents the pinnacle of achievement.
- It means the Fellow has sought and attained, through experience and education, the highest level of expertise.
- As such it is something of which to be duly proud, an enormous achievement and significant career milestone.
What is Fellowship? - President

- With Fellowship comes responsibility.
- As recognised leaders in our respective fields it is incumbent upon all Fellows to embrace this responsibility.
- Fellows have an obligation as leaders to lead the profession, to take on leadership roles, to help advance physiotherapy using thought leadership, skills and experience through education for the greater benefit.
- Others naturally look to leaders for example and guidance.
What is Fellowship? - President

- The pendulum of the Fellow’s role in professional development swings towards that of educator rather than student.
- While Fellowship may represent the beginning of a career as a leader, a balance is required between this and continued pursuit of individual professional development.
What is Fellowship? - President

- Attainment of Fellowship by necessity must be accompanied by a mature attitudinal shift away from the expectation of receipt and towards one of responsibility and proactive leadership.
- Then, and with perseverance, will the benefits become apparent and abundant.