

Paediatric Physiotherapy Training Program

The Royal Childrens Hospital Melbourne

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Background

The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) is the major specialist paediatric hospital in Victoria, the designated state-wide major trauma centre for paediatrics and a Nationally Funded Centre for paediatric cardiac and liver transplantation and hypoplastic left heart syndrome. The RCH has 357 inpatient beds, extensive outpatient services and the physiotherapy department has 26.9 EFT including seven Grade One physiotherapists who are employed on a two year contract.

Program

The Paediatric Training Program (PTP) was established to provide postgraduate training for physiotherapists by integrating knowledge from a broad areas of paediatric physiotherapy. The aim of the program is to increase the number of physiotherapists with specialist knowledge, skills, training and experience in paediatrics. In turn this enhances the healthcare of children in the community.

The program is a 2 year contract with 7 rotations in a variety of areas including orthopaedics, paediatric intensive care, respiratory medicine, cardiac surgery, aquatic, neurosciences and burns.

The program includes adult based learning principles in the form of goal directed learning, co-treatments, self-guided reflective practice and senior skills tutorials in a supportive environment.

Annual Performance Development and Planning provides an opportunity for PTP staff to engage in a 360 degree feedback session, which aids career development and specific goal setting for the individual. Other opportunities for education include attendance at grand rounds, hospital wide and departmental professional development sessions.

Outcomes

As well as being an invaluable resource for succession planning within the Physiotherapy department at RCH graduates from the PTP have progressed to senior paediatric physiotherapy positions in a variety of settings including major hospitals in Australia and overseas, community service providers, in academia and in private practice. Formal post graduate qualifications are frequently undertaken by physiotherapists whilst employed in the PTP which are then extended into doctoral studies, NHMRC grants, fellowships and scholarships, senior management roles, the establishment of advanced scope of practice physiotherapy led clinics and university coordinators. Others have followed a completely different career trajectory and gone onto work or volunteer to establish and improve paediatric services in developing or war affected regions such as Syria, Bangladesh, Haiti, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone.

The Future

Opportunities for the future include formal credentialing of Grade One competencies in line with the Allied Health Credentialing Competency and Capability framework and integration of high and low fidelity simulation into the training program.