Re: Patient referral and the physiotherapist: three decades later

Jonathon Kruger’s recent Editorial (Kruger 2010) is timely in reminding Australian physiotherapists of the major change in their status that occurred in 1976, 35 years ago.

This issue, raised by the Australian delegates Pat Cosh, Rodney Farr, and Doreen Moore, was scheduled for discussion at the World confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), Tel Aviv, 1978. It should be noted that there was considerable resistance within the world physiotherapy community and Australia was the first country to enact this change in status.

I am responding to the Editorial in order to acknowledge the significant contribution made by Doreen Moore, President of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy 1970–74, APA President 1977–79, who spoke to and defended Australia’s position at the Congress. She argued that Australia had already taken this step by repealing the first ethical principle of the Australian Physiotherapy Association, and that we were determined to continue as first contact practitioners and were prepared to be expelled from WCPT if the motion failed. The eventual outcome of the meeting in Tel Aviv was the consensus statement referred to in the Editorial (Kruger 2101).

This was an exciting and challenging time for those of us working in physiotherapy education. Advances in technology, the explosion in scientific knowledge relevant to physiotherapy, together with increasing responsibilities in the clinic and the greater sophistication of health care delivery, were demanding changes in clinical practice. The academic process in physiotherapy was changing from diploma to degree status. Master and doctoral programs were being developed. As Head of the School of Physiotherapy in Sydney, Doreen Moore provided leadership in this process.

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