



# PSV News

## POLIO SERVICES VICTORIA

A Department of Human Services Program  
St. Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, 41 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy 3065  
(3) 9288 3900 / 1800 030 324  
Email: psv@svhm.org.au



P O L I O  
S E R V I C E S  
V I C T O R I A

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PSV Hotline Toll Free 1800 030 324

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### PSV Team 2001

**Chris Graven and Louise King**  
Physiotherapists and service coordinators

Chris Graven has returned from maternity leave to work part time with Polio Services, and will now share the job of service coordinator with Louise King.

Louise has worked for a number of years as a physiotherapist at St Vincent's most recently specialising in musculoskeletal rehabilitation.

**Dr Genevieve Kennedy**  
Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine

**Darren Pereira**  
Orthotist/Prosthetist

**Jenny Wilson**  
Occupational Therapist

**Barbara Rix**  
Sessional Physiotherapist

### In This Issue

- ◆ PSV Clinics
- ◆ Home Modifications
- ◆ Footwear
- ◆ Medication Issues
- ◆ Patient Representative
- ◆ PSV Advisory Committee

### PSV CLINICS

#### Metropolitan

Clinics are held most Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons at St. Vincent's Hospital.

#### Regional

This year there are six planned regional clinics.

February 28<sup>th</sup> - Ballarat  
April - Mornington Peninsula  
June - Wangaratta  
August - Mildura  
October - Traralgon  
December - Warrnambool

### MEDICATION ISSUES

### HOME MODIFICATIONS

Modifications to the home environment, even of a minor scale, can significantly improve independence and safety. At PSV we meet many people who are struggling with difficult home environments. As such it is important to be well informed about home modifications.

- **Occupational Therapy.** Firstly consult an occupational therapist (OT) who will do a home visit to assess your functional abilities, disabilities and home environment. The OT will make recommendations for equipment and/or home modifications required. OT's can be accessed through most Community Health Services or inquiries can be made via GP's, local hospitals, PSV or OT Australia (ph. 9481 6866). In most cases OT services can be obtained free of charge or for a minimal fee, although there may be a waiting period.

- **Home Renovation Service.** The Department of Human Services administers this service which offers assistance with home improvements required for health and safety reasons. This service is free for home owners over sixty or those with a disability. It provides a free home inspection by **Archicentre** regarding home maintenance and general health and safety issues. Where specific home modifications are required, as is the case for people who have polio, the OT should assess first, then work together with Archicentre to design the modifications. The owner receives a written report with recommendations and estimated cost. The Home Renovation Service can also provide low interest Home Renovation Loans to assist in funding such works. To inquire phone 1 800 134 872.

- **P.A.D.P.** The Department of Human Services also administers the Program of Aids for Disabled Persons. This scheme provides necessary equipment and home modifications for people with a permanent disability. P.A.D.P. has strict funding criteria and gives priority to items necessary for safety and independence in essential daily tasks. P.A.D.P. will currently fund up to \$4000 per client per lifetime for home modifications deemed justified.

### POLIO & FOOTWEAR

P.A.D.P. will ask clients to pay any gap in the cost of works and P.A.D.P. funds.

Applications must include assessments from the doctor and occupational therapist, consent from the client (and property owner if it is rental accommodation), an Archicentre report for works over \$1,000, and at least 2 written quotes for works over \$1,000.

If approved, P.A.D.P. selects the contractor and authorises commencement. There may be a delay in obtaining funds with applications being prioritised on waiting lists.

This is an extensive process. Some clients choose to use their own funds. For inquiries phone (03) 9616 7800 and contact your local issuing centre.

- **Department of Veterans Affairs -** Eligible clients can obtain advice and funding assistance for home modifications. For inquiries phone 1 800 802615.

- **Home Maintenance Service -** This service for frail older people or those with a disability is Government funded and administered through local council. It provides simple home maintenance and minor home modifications at a minimal cost - the fees vary by region and the client's capacity to pay is taken into account.

- **Department of Housing Services** Those living in government-owned housing can also access help with home modifications required for health and safety reasons. Contact the local Housing Officer for advice about this process. If approved, Housing Services will fund and manage the whole process. However, an OT assessment of functional needs is still advised.
- Get the right advice, be patient and get it right

### The cost of shoes

## Lipid lowering drugs

PSV has received a number of inquiries from polio survivors regarding side effects of the "statin" family of drugs. These drugs are HMG CoA Reductase Inhibitors and include Atorvastatin (*Lipitor*), Fluvastatin (*Vastin*, *Lescol*), Pravastatin (*Pravachol*), Simvastatin (*Lipex*, *Zocor*). They are effective in lowering cholesterol and LDL cholesterol, and to a lesser extent they also lower triglycerides and elevate HDL cholesterol.

There is very good evidence from clinical trials that these drugs are effective in preventing heart disease in people with elevated cholesterol, and in reducing the incidence of complications and death in people with known heart disease. Recent trials have also indicated that these drugs may help to reduce the risk of stroke and Alzheimer's disease.

The drugs are generally well tolerated. However, of concern to polio survivors are reports that "statins" may also increase polio-related weakness and fatigue.

Myopathy, defined as muscle aching or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in creatinine kinase (CK) values to greater than 10 times the upper limit of normal, is a rare side effect of these drugs. The incidence of this complication is less than 1%. The risk is increased if the drug is given with certain other drugs. If symptoms of myopathy occur the "statin" should be temporarily withheld or discontinued.

Whilst there are articles on the Internet about "statins" and risks in polio survivors, there are no articles on this topic in the medical literature. There have been no trials and reports are anecdotal only and therefore unproven.

A decision to commence a lipid lowering agent should be made in consultation with your doctor, giving due consideration to the benefits of treatment, particularly with regard to heart disease and death, versus the risk of myopathy. Generally medication should only be started after a trial of dietary therapy.

People who are affected with polio probably require more footwear modifications, extra depth shoes, split sizes and custom made shoes than any other patient group. Good footwear and footwear modifications (Heel & sole raises, floats, etc ) are an integral part of orthotic management and it cannot be understated how important a good shoe is to the function of an orthosis ( Brace, Caliper ).

### What to look for in a shoe

#### Heel Counter

The most important feature of shoe design is the heel counter. The heel counter is usually reinforced with a plastic stiffener and this gives the shoe some structural integrity. It also provides the orthosis with a stable base to control and correct the movement of the affected limb.

#### Heel

The heel height of the shoe should be kept to a minimum to ensure stability. A broad low heel is recommended and will be very important if you require any heel raises, etc.

#### Toe Box

The toe box should be deep enough to avoid cramping of the toes and broad enough to accommodate the width of the forefoot ( Ball of the foot to Toes ). Insufficient room in this area can often lead to calluses, corns and toenail problems.

#### Vamp

The vamp is the top of the shoe and it is important that the length of the vamp extends high over the top of the foot to maintain a secure fit and minimise pistoning.

#### Closure

Laces are generally the best closure as they are secure and are easily adjustable but velcro may also be an option.

### Helpful Hints

- Aim to try new shoes on in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest.
- Walk around in the shoe to ensure comfort before purchasing them.
- Sport shoes are often an excellent option.
- If the heel counter and vamp of the shoe have lost their shape and integrity, it may be time to purchase a new pair.
- The heel and sole of your shoe can be repaired by your local cobbler if showing excessive wear and may not require replacement.
- Shoes, however, should generally be replaced at least once a year.
- If your shoes play an integral part of your orthotic management, we strongly recommend that you have a spare pair as a back-up. They can be alternated on a daily basis and will last longer.

Extra-depth and custom made shoes can vary quite considerably in price. Many suppliers will charge additional fees for split sizes and shoe modifications. Extra-depth shoes can range in price from \$100 - \$300 whereas custom made shoes can range from \$400 - \$750.

We have found that only a minority of polio clients require custom made shoes. The majority of clients, even though many have a large discrepancy in foot size, can be fitted with split size extra-depth extra-wide off the shelf shoes.

Developments in the variety of width/depth and styles of extra-depth shoes has now provided the polio client with more options than ever before. |

### PATIENT REPRESENTATION

Polio Services Victoria has access to the Patient Representative at St Vincent's Hospital, Ms Rosie Brown. This service provides a channel for dealing with complaints or concerns relating to care received. It is a valuable resource not only for clients, but for staff in the clinic as it allows a proactive approach to addressing concerns expressed by the clients before they become formalised complaints, and assists in the management of difficult situations.

For further information, Rosie Brown can be contacted Mon to Fri 8am-5pm on (03)9288 3108

### PSV ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The PSV Advisory Committee has been restructured. A consumer group comprising of members of PNV who will represent the concerns of the polio community, has agreed to meet with PSV staff three times a year to provide consumer input and feedback regarding the services offered by PSV. In addition, PSV staff are planning to establish a polio special interest group for health providers to promote awareness about post polio issues amongst health professionals.



**PSV Hotline**  
**1800 030 324**

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