



PSV News

POLIO SERVICES VICTORIA

A Department of Human Services Program
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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 2005/6 (INCLUDING DAYS OF WORK & CONTACT DETAILS)

CATHY WHITE

Service Coordinator and Physiotherapist
Monday – Friday 9288 3900

DR GENEVIEVE KENNEDY

Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine
Tuesday clinics only 9288 3900

DARREN PEREIRA

Orthotist
Mon, Tues, Wednesday 9288 3838

PRIYA DAVIS – until early February 06

Orthotist
Tues, Wed, Friday 9288 3836

MARGARET PETKOFF

Occupational Therapist
Mon & Thursday 9288 3900

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CHRISTMAS HOURS

Over the Christmas period, several members of the PSV team will be taking a short break – after such a busy year, it is time to re-charge the batteries!

- Between Christmas and New Year, Cathy White, Service Coordinator will be on leave. Therefore, unless your query is urgent, general PSV enquiries won't be addressed until Tuesday 3rd January.
- Margaret, Occupational Therapist, is on leave from Christmas until January 16th.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY!

2005 has been a really busy year at PSV, with all the usual activity – metro and regional clinics, newsletters and education sessions with support groups and health practitioners – and a few extras thrown in for good measure.

As a result of the ongoing feedback we get from you, our clients, about the general lack of knowledge in the health community about polio, this has been a major focus for PSV in 2005. Examples of new initiatives include:

- Orthotic seminar for health professionals - see below
- A written guide for health practitioners about polio and exercise. This is now provided to practitioners on request, or when PSV refers a client onto a health practitioner (often a physiotherapist) for an exercise program.
- A new style of health practitioner newsletter, which should be more interesting and eye-catching.
- Health provider education sessions run in conjunction with some regional clinics. These sessions run in our lunch break and help to raise awareness of regional hospital staff to the late effects of polio.
- PSV presentations at a recent National Physiotherapy conference in Melbourne and presentations by our orthotic staff at the Orthotic conference in Sydney.

A TEAM APPROACH TO ORTHOTIC MANAGEMENT

For those who have come through the PSV clinic and gone on to have an orthosis (caliper/brace) made by Darren or Priya, you will be very aware of the team involvement in this process.

Dr. Kennedy and Cathy are part of the process of recommending a new orthosis and often Cathy will then be involved in walking training after the new orthosis is fitted. As others will be aware, this extent of team involvement is not necessarily the norm with orthotic management.

On Friday 2nd December, PSV together with our colleagues in St. Vincent's Rehabilitation unit and Orthotic department, ran a full days seminar for health professionals. This day focused on the complex needs of orthotic clients, and the importance of everyone – client, orthotist, physio and doctor being involved in the process.

Sixty-five (!) health professionals from Victoria and NSW attended, including rehabilitation doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, podiatrists and students. The day was a great success and should result in a better understanding of health professionals about the types of orthotic issues faced by many polio patients.

PSV CLINICS

Regional

February 1 st	Shepparton
March 15 th	Horsham
June 14 th	Korumburra
August 2 nd	Swan Hill
October 4 th	Bairnsdale
December 6 th	Bendigo

Metropolitan

Clinics are held most Tuesday afternoons at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne.

POWER WHEELCHAIRS

Following on from our last article, about wheelchairs and scooters, in this issue we will talk specifically about power (or electric) wheelchairs.

There are many reasons why people need a power wheelchair, but generally people are suited to a power wheelchair when they can no longer successfully use a manual wheelchair. This may occur because people do not have the energy to push themselves, and/or the act of pushing a manual wheelchair causes increased pain in their arms or back.

A power wheelchair can enable people to be independently mobile both indoors and outdoors with minimal energy expenditure.

There are four basic types of power wheelchairs.

Front Wheel Drive (FWD):

The main drive wheel is at the front of the wheelchair. The wheelchair consists of *two main drive wheels at the front* and two casters at the back. These wheelchairs have a very good turning circle, making them easy to maneuver in tight spaces. These chairs can be ideal if you live in a small unit where turning space is limited.

The problem with front wheel drive chairs is that they can be difficult to steer until you get used to them, as they will fish tail if you travel too fast.

Rear Wheel Drive (RWD):

The main drive wheel is at the back of the wheelchair. These wheelchairs consist of *two main drive wheels at the rear* and two casters at the front. They will also have anti-tip wheels at the back activated when traveling up uneven ground. These chairs are very easy to steer, but their turning circle is larger than the FWD.

Therefore, if your residence is small a RWD wheelchair may not be suitable.

Mid-Wheel Drive (MWD):

The main drive wheel is situated towards the front of the wheelchair. These have two main drive wheels, two casters with ground contact at the back and two casters at the front. These chairs do not fish tail like a FWD and have a better turning circle than the RWD chairs. The front casters do not make contact with the ground unless traveling over uneven surfaces, so they do have a tendency to rock when you sit in them, or travel on uneven surfaces.

As this chair can be much bulkier than a FWD and RWD wheelchair, people can sometimes feel overwhelmed when they sit in them.

Centre Wheel Drive (CWD):

The hub of the drive wheel is in line with the person's centre of gravity. There are two casters at the front and 2 casters at the back of the chair. All 6 wheels have contact with the ground. On some models, the casters can act independently of each other, making travel over rough ground very comfortable. This makes the chair very stable and maneuverable.

Often, a wheelchair may also need to be customized to maximise your independence in the chair. Various customisations can help you to sit straighter, reduce pain, fatigue and improve comfort and function.

These may include:

Tilt in Space

Tilt in space maintains the existing angle between the backrest and seat, by tilting the whole seat backwards. The seat can be tilted back a little or the whole way, which is about 55 degrees. This can assist with pressure relief and postural relief when you become fatigued. Conversely, if the chair is set up so that a small forward tilt is possible, many people find it easier to transfer.

If you find it difficult to transfer in the middle of the day to bed, tilt in space enables you to have a nap without waking up with an aching neck, arm or bottom.

Cushions:

The right cushion can be as important as the wheelchair itself! Cushions should always be selected in conjunction with the wheelchair and also need to be specific to your needs.

Cushions are made from different materials, which offer a range of pressure relief. These materials include foam, rubber, gel and air.

If you are able to move easily and weight shift regularly during the day, then a good quality standard foam cushion may suffice. However, if you have difficulty weight shifting, or you drag yourself across the seat, you may be at risk of developing a pressure area. Therefore, a more sophisticated cushion with gel, air or high-tech foam may be needed. These cushions reduce dragging on the skin and support the weight of the body.

One important to remember: if you place lambswool or additional padding on a cushion its potential benefits are lost. If the cushion is uncomfortable without the extra padding, it is probably time to contact your therapist and look for a new cushion!

Establishing which type of power chair is the best for you is a complex process. Lots of factors will influence the decision, including where and when you use the chair, what you will be doing in the wheelchair and your physical independence. Often, several types of chair may need to be trialled in order to clarify what best meets your needs. Ideally, you, your therapist and the wheelchair supplier should work together to gradually piece together what elements are required for your power chair.



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