

# 40<sup>th</sup> Annual President's Report

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**President, Arthritis and Osteoporosis WA**

Welcome to our 40<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. The burden of musculoskeletal disorders in Australia is profound. Musculoskeletal conditions, specifically osteoarthritis (OA), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), juvenile arthritis (JA) and osteoporosis (OP), are recognised as National Health Priority Areas. The objective of Arthritis and Osteoporosis WA is to reduce the incidence and disabling effects of arthritis, osteoporosis and related conditions in the people of WA.

2011 was another positive year for our organisation. Despite the continuing tough economic climate, we remained in surplus and one of our key goals, establishing the Chair of Musculoskeletal Medicine, progressed significantly. We formally changed our name to Arthritis & Osteoporosis WA (AOWA), uniting the two arms of our organisation in order to better convey who we are and who we seek to help. We also added to our self-management programs, creating a strong and comprehensive suite of options to offer consumers.



## Major programs conducted throughout the year

### Chair of Musculoskeletal Medicine



The campaign to establish the Chair of Musculoskeletal Medicine was officially launched on April 18th when AOWA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UWA and the North Metropolitan Area Health Service, agreeing to instate a Winthrop Professor of Musculoskeletal Medicine at QE II Medical Centre/Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. The new Professor will become vital to the training of many new doctors who will specialise in the field. New cutting edge research undertaken may well provide answers for better treatments and even a cure with the advent of stem cell technology. We are committed to funding one third of the salaries involved for the new Professor, including the establishment costs and to build funds for research. As such, we began a capital funds appeal in 2011 with the goal to raise a minimum research capital base of \$3 million. We have received pledges of \$1.5 million to date and received \$234,000 for the year. We aim to fill the position in 2012.

### Arthritis Awareness Week

A public seminar entitled 'Managing Arthritis' was held in Fremantle on March 26th. With over 60 attendees, the speakers included Rheumatologist Dr Gino Mastaglia, Podiatrist Ms Deidre Beard and Physiotherapist Ms Melanie Galbraith.

## **National Healthy Bones Week**

This joint initiative of Dairy Australia and Osteoporosis Australia is aimed at primary school children. The theme for 2011 was 'Wake Up Your Bones'. Staff members Janelle Staton and Bec Beazley visited Rosalie and Lake Gwelup schools to educate children with an interactive lesson on ways to keep bones healthy.

## **Arthritis Today Magazine**

We continued with three editions per year and trialled changes to the layout to modernize the style. In depth articles covered during the year included Osteoarthritis, Pain Relief Medication, AS, Pregnancy and Arthritis, and Alcohol and Arthritis. Circulation of the magazine is nearing 12,000 and readerships over 20,000

## **Education Services**

We continue to provide a quality spectrum of programs for consumers and health professionals.

Consumer Education Programs included:

- Self-Management Courses - AOWA provides several health professional led and peer led disease-specific Education & Self-Management Programs for consumers with arthritis and related conditions, along with a physiotherapy led exercise class for consumers with Osteoporosis and minimum trauma fractures to enhance bone strength and improve balance. We launched a new short course, *Challenge Your Pain*, specifically for people suffering pain from fibromyalgia or general arthritis. Another new program, *Ankylosing Spondylitis Education Program*, commenced with two pilot groups. To date the initial feedback from participants has been extremely positive.
- Spinal Pain Education Program - The final seminar/workshop of this three part program was held in Kalgoorlie in February.
- Seminars held metro and regional areas
- Telephone advisory service
- Support Groups (country and metro) - Facilitated by trained volunteer leaders, AOWA runs several support groups which provide participants with the opportunity to talk freely about their experiences and feelings in a safe, non-judgemental environment. Specialised talks with guest speakers took place during selected meetings.
- AOWA website with online resource materials - We commenced a revamp of the website and sent out an e-newsletter in June to 8,000 recipients offering free booklets on bone and joint disease. Over 30% of recipients read the email and 15% of these passed the information on to another party. This resulted in a spike of visits to our website.
- We provided exercise options in Tai Chi for Arthritis, Nordic Pole Walking, Hydrotherapy and Pilates.

## **Rural Clinic Program**

Over 155 Rheumatology Day Clinics were held throughout regional WA which included clinics at 15 different locations. Approximately 2474 patients were seen.

## Family Fun Day and Camp Freedom



The annual JIA Family Fun Day was hosted by Adventure World in April. 53 people attended, with approximately half of the families being new to AOWA activities. Janelle Staton and Debbie Tunbridge attended to speak with the children.

Our 2011 JIA Camp was held at Ern Halliday Recreation Camp in Hillarys. 21 children and 8 camp leaders participated in activities such as a coastal bike ride, caving, high ropes and abseiling. Campers were also encouraged to earn points for their faction for willingness to participate, overcoming fears and good team work. Thanks must go to Lotterywest for their continued funding support. We also thank Debbie Tunbridge, Pavla Walsh and the volunteers who make this important event possible.

## Musculoskeletal Health Networks

AOWA continues to be an active member of the Musculoskeletal Network, who in 2011 completed the following projects:

- Musculoskeletal Health Network Forum - held in September with over 120 policy-makers, clinicians, researchers and health consumers and carers contributing.
- Spinal Pain Working Group - completed an educational forum for health professionals and consumers in regional WA regarding best practice management and self-management for spinal pain, development and trial of a consumer guide for low back pain, and assessment of beliefs and likely practice behaviours among final-year health students in WA in the context of low back pain.
- Inflammatory Arthritis Working Group - contributed to a project examining the skills and knowledge required by community-based health professionals for the team management of individuals with rheumatoid arthritis.
- Commencement of the Implementation of the WA Elective Joint Replacement Service Model of Care
- A project supported by the State Health Research Advisory Council has commenced at Fremantle Hospital to examine the clinical and cost benefits of implementing a novel follow-up system for patients who have undergone total hip or knee joint replacement surgery.
- The WA Osteoporosis Model of Care was launched in September.

## Public Relations and Fundraising

We continue to fundraise with direct mail, raffles, bequest program, charity bingo, Christmas Cards, the bookstore and our second hand bookshop.

Special events held included:

- Art for Arthritis
- HBF Run for a Reason – In 2011 we were invited to return as one of the beneficiary charities for this event. Over 100 participants fundraised for Arthritis and Osteoporosis WA and the event raised a total of \$22,000 for us. Thank you to the music group the Sambanistas and the 30 volunteers who donated their time on our behalf.
- Jessie's Fun Run – held on the 29th May, this event was the idea



of 10 year old Jessie Soden, who was chosen as a JIA ambassador for AOWA. Her event was attended by over 800 people raised over \$25,000.

- Abbott Solutions Arthritis Golf Classic – this was the third year that accounting firm Abbott Solutions supported us by sponsoring this event. Held on 18th November at the Araluen Golf Resort, 20 teams attended and a surplus of \$8,500 was achieved.



## Summary

The events, achievements and programs outlined are the result of the hard work and support of our team of dedicated staff, Board of management, volunteers and donors. Together, this effort has placed us in an excellent position for the 2012 year.

Of course this would not have been possible without the hard work of the Board the many volunteers and staff

Thank you.