

Editorial

Rehabilitation for All?

In front of you lies a new issue of our journal in a (new) season of the year, Autumn. In the northern hemisphere, it symbolises and marks the beauty and satisfaction of harvesting on one hand but the decay of life on the other. In the southern hemisphere, it is Spring: the excitement of new life, rebirth, that become manifest in nature! I feel that in both seasons, nature is at its best and often catch myself looking in awe at the colours in the sky, the beauty of trees and plants. When the days become shorter, when the trees are leafless, when plants seem to have died and no flowers are to be seen in the wild, there is always the hope that that there will be new life again. In this “season of mist and mellow fruitfulness”, I have the privilege to present the next issue of our journal.

It is an issue with a limited number of articles. Without denying the relevance of *any* of these articles, I was personally very interested in two of them, not without reason. The two articles I refer to are from South African authors and both discuss access to rehabilitation for all in South Africa. Most of you may know that I have lived in that country for 10 years, which is a quarter of my working life, and is the country where I developed a great interest in community-based rehabilitation approaches; purely because the conditions were asking for it. There is, however, a distinction made toward the focus of rehabilitation in the two articles. One deals with ‘**rehabilitation for all**’ and the other with ‘**rehabilitation for people with disabilities**’. You may feel that I am splitting hairs here and if so, you are both right and wrong. In an ideal world there wouldn’t be a difference. However, this world isn’t ideal and unfortunately there is a difference whereby undoubtedly people with disabilities are the ones who – even in high income countries – experience far more barriers in accessing rehabilitation services than people without disabilities. The observant and well-informed reader may associate immediately the focus on ‘rehabilitation for all’ with the drive of the World Health Organisation and others to ensure that rehabilitation becomes part of universal health coverage. Those readers will also recognise that previously, the mission of the World Health Organisation and others was different. It focused on ensuring access to ‘rehabilitation for people with disabilities’ usually becoming manifest in so-called Community Based Rehabilitation. What thus is meant with rehabilitation in the current context of ‘rehabilitation for all’ means a narrow explanation of what rehabilitation is all about. What was or is meant

with Community Based Rehabilitation is a much broader explanation of what rehabilitation is all about: a more eco-social explanation following all elements of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. But one that is 'restricted' or specifically focused at ensuring access to that broad form of rehabilitation for people with disabilities and their families because the reality is that this particular group was recognised by the World Health Organisation and others in the seventies and eighties of last century as a group of people who hardly had access to such comprehensive services and lacked equal opportunities. Does it mean that approximately 40 year later the situation is solved or is better for people with disabilities? The answers can be found in these two articles from South Africa, which, in comparison with all other African National States, has far more (rehabilitation)resources as well as progressive and far-reaching laws and legislation benefiting people with disabilities.

I truly hope that you will take the time to read those articles in detail; analyse them, critically review them and respond to either the authors or myself. I know it will mean that you have to set time aside for this. Yet, you as practitioner, scientist, policymaker, planner or manager must read what goes on in the world and critically review what developments have taken place; learn from it and realise how we can do things better. Let developments be made on basis of practical experience rather than on theoretical concepts, irrespective of how smart they seem to be. Isn't it time for the emancipation of the highly educated and influential ones? These days the policy towers contain largely people with scientific and policy knowledge, but unfortunately few with experiential knowledge.

Wishing you all very well and don't forget to respond to me at editor.dcid@gmail.com

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