

**INTERNATIONAL BONE AND JOINT DECADE - AUSTRALIA’S PARTICIPATION**

The Bone and Joint Decade was initiated because of the epidemic of musculoskeletal disease that is occurring worldwide as the population ages. The concept of the Decade commenced in 1998 in Lund, Sweden, when orthopaedic surgeons, rheumatologists and other health professionals determined to increase the profile of these conditions in the community. The Bone and Joint Decade was launched in Geneva by the World Health Organisation in January 2000.

The Bone and Joint Decade had four major aims:

* To raise awareness of the growing burden of musculoskeletal disorders in society.
* To promote prevention of musculoskeletal disorders and empower patients through educational campaigns.
* To advance research on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders.
* To improve the diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders.

In Australia musculoskeletal disorders are the second most common condition presented to a general practitioner and the third leading cause of health system expenditure, with an estimated total cost of over $24 billion in 2007.

The Decade focused on four areas; arthritis, osteoporosis, back pain and road trauma in developing countries.

Since its international launch in January 2000 the Bone and Joint Decade has been endorsed by the United Nations, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank and the Vatican. There are now 70 nations and 700 patient advocacy and health professional organisations. The Decade has focused attention on the important musculoskeletal diseases, demonstrating to health care providers that for a relatively modest investment, significant benefits will accrue.

A Steering Committee for the Bone and Joint Decade in Australia has bought together these important strands of research, education and service to improve the lifestyle of the millions of Australians who suffer each week from rheumatic conditions.

The Decade in Australia has seen many advances in musculoskeletal health. The Australian Bone and Joint Decade National Action Network (NAN) was established by the AOA, ARA and Arthritis Australia and its state branches. Since then other musculoskeletal disciplines have participated in the NAN including The Australian Physiotherapy Association, Sports Medicine Australia, Osteoporosis Australia and the Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society, Australia and New Zealand Society of Biomechanics, Australian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, Australian Musculoskeletal Imaging Group, Chiropractors’ Association of Australia, Matrix Biology Society of Australia and New Zealand, Australian Pilates Method Association and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

During the course of the Decade we have also been supported by members of the pharmaceutical and device industries.

The first coordinator of the NAN was the Arthritis Foundation, followed by the AOA and the other organisations, as mentioned above. Professor Peter Brooks, a member of the International Steering Committee, took the reins as the Coordinator for the Australian Network. He was followed by Ben Horgan, the first consumer worldwide to become a NAN Coordinator and his patient orientated experience certainly directed the Decade in Australia towards better outcomes for patients. Ruth Lilian, OAM is the current coordinator.

*The work of the Australian Network has been to raise awareness of the growing burden of musculoskeletal disorders in society as demonstrated below:-*

The Australian NAN convened a Summit in Canberra 2002, attended by Government Department Representatives, Medical Practitioners, Surgeons, Industry and Consumers. The proceedings of the Summit were published in the Medical Journal of Australia.

The BJD NAN played an important part in the naming of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions as the 7th National Health Priority in 2004, which led to free screening for osteoporosis for people over the age of 70.

The Australian Government funded a new Musculoskeletal Core Curriculum for undergraduate medical students.

Musculoskeletal research funding applications are now considered as a separate group by the NHMRC.

The Australian Government funds the AOA Joint Replacement Registry.

Australia has introduced Youth Camps for children with musculoskeletal conditions and delegates from India, South Africa and the Netherlands have attended camps in Australia.

Legislation of helmets for all cyclists and motor bike riders

Australia hosted the 2007 International Network Meeting for the Bone and Joint Decade on the Gold Coast, where the major theme for the meeting was Back Pain. The meeting included a combined session at the AOA ASM on Low Back Pain convened by the AOA and the Spine Society.

A report on a collaborative global research project on Osteoporosis involving the AOA and an account of the background of the BJD was presented by Lars Lidgren, Chairman of the International BJD Committee. John Hart, representing the AOA on the Network presented the Australian experience of Osteoporosis Management resulting from a survey of AOA fellows which was analysed by Vanessa Wells and Stephen Graves of the Joint Registry.

In 2009, a Think Tank was convened in Sydney with representatives of 15 of the affiliated organisations and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing to address Australia’s achievements to date and look at a way forward to continuing the aims and objectives of the 2000 to 2010 Decade

In 2011, a Summit will be held in Parliament House Canberra, to celebrate the achievements of the Decade in Australia.

A website, www.bjd.org.au, hosting the Arthritis Health Services Guide and many other resources, has been developed and has recorded 250,000 visits in the last 5 years.

Numerous public seminars providing information to the community have been held throughout the Decade.

The BJD NAN has partnered member organisations at their annual conferences. A BJD symposium on Road Trauma was held at the 2010 AOA ASM in Adelaide in September.

The greatest achievement from the BJD to date is the increased level of networking that has facilitated a greater level of awareness of the burden of musculoskeletal disease and trauma. Patients have embraced the team approach to treating these issues and now we are seeing professional bodies collaborating to a much greater extent. The success of the BJD will ultimately be measured by the outcomes from this continued collaboration and the improvements which patients can measure.

**INTERNATIONAL BJD**

At the International Network Meeting on The Gold Coast, it was determined that the BJD should continue its work beyond 2010. At the International BJD Meeting in Washington, USA in 2009, it was confirmed that the BJD infrastructure should proceed.

At this Meeting, Margaret Smith from the Matrix Biology Society of Australia and New Zealand and John Hart from Australian Orthopaedic Association were elected to join Ben Horgan as Australian International BJD Ambassadors. The BJD Ambassador Programme “honours outstanding service and achievement in the musculoskeletal community”. There are 60 ambassadors worldwide. An interactive musical and dance DVD produced by the Australian NAN, to help children take care of their bones and bodies titled “The Super Strong Bones Show – Makes Building Super Strong Bones, Super Fun!” won equal first prize and the main song – Super Strong Bones- won the Australian Children’s Songwriting Award in 2009.

The final Network Meeting in 2010 was held where it all began, in Lund, Sweden, the site of the secretariat and the home of Lars Lidgren, the instigator of the Decade and the International Convenor for the Decade. At this meeting, John Hart presented on the History of Road Trauma in Australia, a topic which bears great relevance to the road trauma problems in developing countries, particularly in South East Asia and India.

At this final Meeting, Ruth Lilian won the award for best poster prepared on the work achieved by the Australian NAN and Ruth was elected as the fourth Australian International BJD Ambassador.

**CURRENT STATUS**

A new International Coordinating Council, chaired by Prof Tony Woolf of the UK, has been established and a strategic action plan was developed in Lund to reduce the burden and cost of musculoskeletal disease to individuals, carers and society and to promote musculoskeletal health and science worldwide.

As the only organisation that brings together **all** stakeholders across the globe, considering **all** musculoskeletal conditions and providing access to high-level policy makers, the Bone and Joint Decade will continue to strengthen its networks throughout the world.

The role will be to continue to provide a unified voice and global reach to deliver our vision of society where prevention, treatment and care of people with musculoskeletal disorders are of a high standard and consistently accessible. The improvement of the health-related quality of life for people with, or at risk of, musculoskeletal disorders should be among the leading major health concerns in the minds and actions of opinion formers throughout the world.

In a report from Prof Woolf, he writes that the organisation has gained its strength from bringing together national and international professional, scientific and patient organisations, and much progress has been made over the last Decade. In a number of countries Musculoskeletal Conditions (MSC) have gained public and political priority and non-communicable diseases are slowly moving up the agenda in regional and global organisations such as the US NIH, EU, UN, and WHO.

However, much remains to be done, the possibilities for prevention and treatment are not being fully realised. It is for this reason that the Decade has renewed its mandate through to 2020.

A Strategic Action Plan has been developed to concentrate efforts on achieving the objective of priority for bone and joint disorders. The Strategic Plan was presented at The Bone and Joint Decade World Conference, Lund, 10-11 September 2010 and discussed in detail by the individual delegates and representatives of National Action Networks and supporting organisations and I have attached this for your information.

There are now 70 participating countries with 62 NAN’s and 63 supporting governments. The WHO has initiated a global program for improving road traffic safety and trauma care, based on an initiative from the BJD.

The work of the 2000 – 2010 Decade will continue and the name will be retained - BJD 2010 – 2020 and a new focus added – that of *Action for Road Safety* – which incorporates all affiliates and the work of the AOA on road trauma will play a significant role in assisting with a Trauma in Developing Countries Program.

It is frightening to know that every 30 seconds someone dies on the world’s roads. One million persons per year die and over 25 million are injured or permanently disabled from road traffic accidents. The majority of these injuries are to the musculoskeletal system; 75% of the fatalities and injuries occur in the developing world.

The Australian NAN will establish a second Network Group to work on *Action for Road Safety.* We look forward to continuing to create awareness and promotion of the work of the International and Australian Networks in ensuring that Bone and Joint Health is the Business of Every Australian and the vital message – *to keep Australians moving* – is one we all need to continue to work together to achieve.

Please keep in touch with the website – it is continually updated. As always, we welcome comments, articles, and resources.

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