

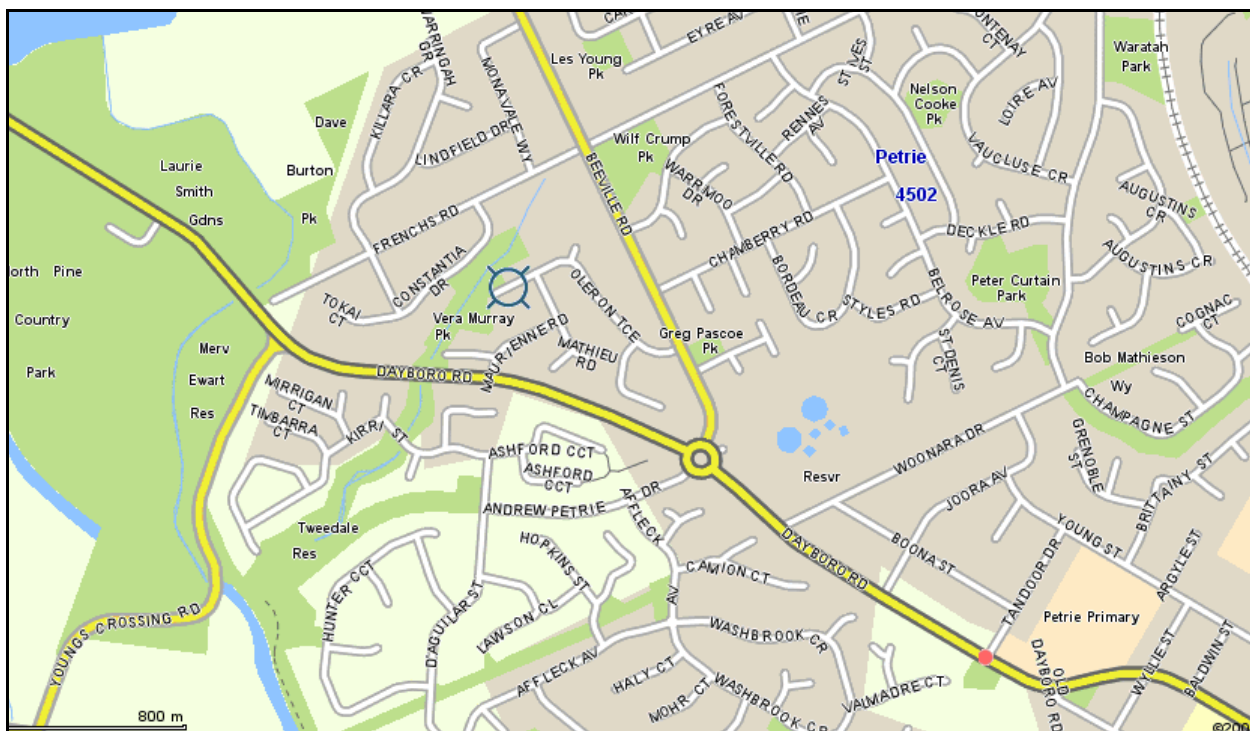
# Spine Tingles

Newsletter of the Scoliosis Support Group of Qld Inc.

May 2007



**Afternoon Tea**  
**Saturday 9 June, 2.30pm**  
**37 Oleron Tce**  
**PETRIE**



## In this Issue ...

The pink insert contains material on a variety of health-related topics extracted from the **Self Help Queensland** Newsletter for March Quarter 2007. If you would like to receive the SHQ newsletter you may ask to be added to their mailing list.

**Mrs Ida Johnstone** and **Mrs Joan Young** have written about their shared experience with scoliosis and illustrate how friendship and support can help us through life's difficult times. Thanks to Ida and Joan for their contribution.

Maree Izatt, from the **Paediatric Spine Research Group**, has provided information on the group's activities (white insert). **PSRG** was formed in December 2002 by agreement between QUT, the

Mater Hospital and the Queensland Orthopaedic Research Trust. The group's mission is to undertake both clinical and basic research into spinal deformities and other spinal disorders. PSRG membership includes spinal surgeons Dr Geoff Askin and Dr Robert Labrom, medical engineers Professor Mark Percy, Professor John Evans, Dr Clayton Adam, Dr Paige Little, and physiotherapist Maree Izatt.

Maree and Dr Adam invite contact. They have included email addresses and phone numbers. They are happy to give a presentation if requested, as communicating research outcomes is an important part of their activities. Please register your interest by contacting the Scoliosis Support Group (details overleaf). If we receive sufficient interest from membership we will organise a meeting.

## **Scoliosis Support Group of Queensland Inc**

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This newsletter is published  
quarterly, normally before a social  
gathering or meeting.

### **Warning:**

Information published in this  
newsletter represents views of the  
authors and is not to be seen as a  
recommendation or the views of the  
Support Group. We aim to inform  
our members of as many options as  
possible. It is the responsibility of  
individual patients to decide on their  
treatment in consultation with their  
doctor.

## **Tax Deductible Gifts**

Since February 2007 the Support Group has had Deductible Gift Recipients (DGR) status with the Australian Taxation Office.

If you would like to donate, please make your cheque payable to the Scoliosis Support Group of Queensland Inc, and mail it to 37 Oleron Tce, Petrie 4502.

Our treasurer will issue you with a receipt for taxation purposes.

## **New Service Agreement**

A new service agreement with Queensland Health is due to be signed which will guarantee funding from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2010.

Apart from the service agreement, funding is contingent on the Support Group remaining an incorporated body with a working executive.

We ask our membership to please consider their commitment to the Support Group. The Annual General Meeting will be held in August or September and unless the AGM is well-attended and all executive positions are filled the Support Group will not be able to continue its valuable work.

## **English Language Brochures**

The stock of 40,000 brochures which was printed in June 2005 has been used up. A reprint of 30,000 has been ordered from Nicholson Printers, Caboolture.

## **Open Access Online Journal**

<http://www.scoliosisjournal.com/>

*Scoliosis* is open access, peer-reviewed online journal that encompasses all aspects of research on the prevention, control, and conservative (non-surgical) treatment of scoliosis and other spinal deformities. It commenced publication in March 2006.

*Scoliosis* aims to provide an integrated and balanced view of diagnostic, research, and treatment procedures to enhance effective collaboration among specialists in this field worldwide.

Articles cover such topics as: school screening programs, pressures and stresses on scoliotic vertebral discs, correction by bracing, linkage between genes and idiopathic scoliosis, social acceptability of scoliosis treatments, natural history of AIS and long-term treatment effects.

## FRIENDSHIP ACROSS THE DECADES

Scoliosis brought Ida and Joan together in November 1960. Ida was nearing the end of her treatment and Joan was at the beginning of her treatment. Dr Don Tuffley was the treating physician for both girls and had sent Joan over to the Royal Brisbane Hospital to talk to Ida and other girls who had worn body plaster casts. Joan was apprehensive about the casts and Dr Tuffley felt that talking to these girls would put her mind at ease.

Joan and Ida are amazed at the coincidences in how their scoliosis was identified. Ida's mother was making her a new dress and had difficulty making the dress fit correctly, even though she checked her measurements. Joan's grandmother was making Joan a new dress and she kept telling Joan to stand up straight and Joan insisted that she was standing straight. Both families suspected that it was the girls' backs that were the problem not the new dresses. The scoliosis must have developed over a short period of time, as both girls had new dresses made within the previous couple of months.

Ida's parents took her to the accident and emergency section of the Maryborough Base Hospital as soon as they realised their daughter's back was not straight. The physician referred to the Medical Superintendent who prescribed a course of physiotherapy. After 3 months there was no improvement, so Ida was referred

About two months after her grandmother mentioned that she thought there was something wrong with Joan's back, the family went to the beach for holidays. It was when Joan was on the beach in her swimming togs that her parents saw that her back was not straight. The holiday was cut short and Joan was taken to see her local GP. He diagnosed scoliosis immediately and referred Joan to Dr Don Tuffley.

The treatment for both girls lasted for many months and consisted of a series of body plaster casts. The plaster was applied to a torso stretched straight and was replaced approximately every six weeks. Joan recalls that Monday was the day that the plaster was cut off (with very large shears) and Wednesday was the day that the new plaster was applied. The girls loved being free of the plaster cast for a precious few hours and enjoyed a shower and a scratch!

Ida and Joan's mothers became friends and supported each other. When Ida and her mother came to Brisbane for Ida's treatment they stayed with Joan's family.

Wearing a body plaster cast necessitated some changes to the girls' routines. Joan recalls that she did her homework kneeling at the coffee table. Ida's mother would place a pillow on the floor for her to kneel on, at the evening meal table. She insisted that Ida eat with the family and this was the only way that she could see what she was eating and be at face level to talk to other family members.

Ida's treatment came to an end during 1961 when Dr Tuffley identified that she had stopped growing, and she was left with a 70 degree curve to the right side. In October 1961, Joan continued her treatment with a Milwaukee Brace which she wore for thirteen months until she stopped growing. In November 1962, Joan's treatment ended, leaving her with an 80 degree curve to the right side.

## Things My Mother Taught Me

**My mother taught me CONSIDERATION.**  
"If you're going to kill each other, please do it outside."

**My mother taught me RELIGION.**  
"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

**My mother taught me IRONY**  
"Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about."

**My mother taught me STAMINA.**  
"You'll sit there until all that cabbage is gone."

**My mother taught me ANTICIPATION.**  
"Just wait until we get home."

**My mother taught me about WEATHER.**  
"Your room looks like a cyclone went through it."

**My mother taught me WISDOM.**  
"When you get to be my age, you'll understand."

**My mother taught me GENETICS.**  
"You're just like your father."

**My mother taught me about my ROOTS.**  
"Shut the door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?"

**My mother taught me JUSTICE.**  
"One day you'll have kids and I hope they turn

After two years of being out of circulation due to her plaster cast, all Ida wanted to do when she “rejoined the human race” was to participate in sporting activities. However, her parents were concerned that she could hurt her back so the only sport that they would agree to was for her to join the local Marching Girls team called the Maryborough Shellaires (the team was sponsored by the Shell Company). This proved a valuable decision as the continual training and discipline of needing to pull her shoulders back and hold herself straight for the judges helped Ida regain her posture after two years of the heavy plaster cast and walking with a forward lean.

Ida is the eldest daughter of Italian migrants and not long after she came out of the body plaster, her father died suddenly leaving her mother a young widow with five children to raise. Ida’s life became one of supporting her mother by helping her to run the family fruit shop and taking care of younger siblings. Consequently, throughout her life, she has not given her scoliosis too much thought, other than to carefully choose loose fitting clothes.

Ida and Joan kept in touch over the years through corresponding and keeping each other informed of what they were doing with their lives. Both went on to marry and to have two children each (all born naturally). Joan had a pigeon pair and Ida had two sons. Both girls went back to work full time while they raised their children. Joan worked for the Queensland Government in administration roles and Ida went on to become a Telstra team leader in a call centre.

Since both girls’ semi-retirement from their jobs in 2006, they have been enjoying each others company once again. Ida has moved to the Gold Coast with her husband of 40 years and Joan has moved into a town house complex at Brendale. All of their children are married and they have seven grandchildren between them with another little one on the way. None of the grandchildren show any signs of developing scoliosis and of course their grandmothers are carefully on the lookout. Joan has embraced being a grandmother with enthusiasm and loves to help her children with their little ones.

Ida and her husband have relocated from Maryborough to the Gold Coast and plan to retire there. Their elder son and his family live in Penrith NSW, and the Gold Coast is closer for them to visit, so they get to see their grandchildren a little more than when they lived in Maryborough. Their younger son and his family live on the Sunshine Coast, so they are not too far away for frequent visits.



**Joan at 12 wearing a plaster, with a friend**



**Joan at 13 wearing her brace, with a friend**



**Ida at 15 after her treatment, in Brisbane for a marching girls event**

## Paediatric Spine Research Group

Queensland University of Technology   Mater Hospitals Brisbane   Queensland Orthopaedic Research Trust

May 16, 2007

### Scoliosis Support Group of Qld

The Paediatric Spine Research Group is a unique Australian research group that has a special interest in Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis and the treatment of children's spinal deformity. We have recently started a project looking for reasons why some small scoliosis curves stay the same and why some curves just keep getting bigger. Sometimes wearing a brace or doing exercises doesn't stop the scoliosis getting bigger. At the Mater, any research findings will be put to use in the Scoliosis Clinic so that we may be able to better predict which curves need to be watched closely and which curves can confidently be watched less often.

Members of our research group, Dr Askin and Dr Labrom, may offer surgery to correct a scoliosis that has proven to be resistant to treatment and is continuing to increase. If the scoliosis is suitable, the Mater can perform a keyhole scoliosis correction procedure to minimise the trauma of surgery and, of course, the scar. The Mater is the sole location in Australia where this keyhole scoliosis procedure is performed. It is a very technically difficult technique and requires special instruments and special training to perform. Between Dr Askin and Dr Labrom, over 120 of these procedures have been performed at the Mater since April 2000. The QUT/Mater spine research group has been closely monitoring this ever increasing group of scoliosis patients and to date has published 8 articles in International Medical Journals on various aspects of spinal deformity monitoring and correction at the Mater Hospital. We have also given 23 presentations at local, national and international meetings since January 2006 on our many research projects.

The doctors at the Mater can order a Biomodel if a scoliosis is very complex and details are hard to see on X-Rays and scans. The model assists if the patient needs surgery and occasionally it helps the doctors decide that a patient does not need any surgery done. The model pictured, right, is of a 9 year old boy with a Congenital Scoliosis who had many complex deformities which made his spine curved. This model, helped the Mater spinal surgeons decide the best way to control his scoliosis as he grew.



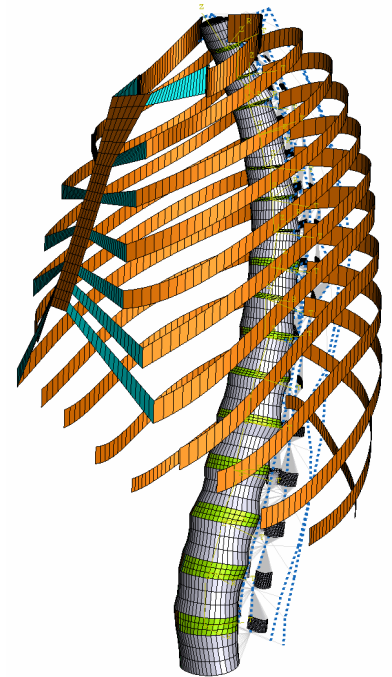
Our research group has a number of Medical Engineers at QUT working on examining the biomechanical aspects of scoliosis. 22 subjects with scoliosis volunteered to have MRI scans for research

## Paediatric Spine Research Group

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last year, with and without a compressive load on their spines. The engineers will study the scans to see how the spinal discs and the scoliosis behave when it is loaded compared to unloaded to learn how gravity affects the scoliosis and why the scoliosis curves continue to get worse with growth of the spine.

Another “world first” project we have been working on is to create a patient specific computer model of the spine using the information obtained from a CT scan. Our Brisbane group is the only place in the world working on achieving this huge task. Our aim is to have the computer create a perfect reproduction of a patient’s spine, on which the surgeon could then perform various simulated surgical procedures. This will allow the surgeon to test out which procedure or instruments would achieve the best result for the patient, **before** the patient has had any surgery. The computer would also be able to predict the result of each surgical option, in terms of how much the curve and rib cage deformity corrects for the various types of surgery or instrumentation that the surgeon can imagine. The picture, right, is our developing computer model of the spine and ribcage with all the various ligaments and ribcage included. We are working on adding the muscles soon but each small step takes years of painstaking work to ensure it is accurate to the true human form. After the programming is complete, the doctor will simply insert the CT scan into the computer and the model will be generated on the screen and ready to perform various surgeries on.



We thank the members of the Scoliosis Support Group of Qld for showing their interest and have been glad to share some of the scoliosis research work that is being conducted right here in Brisbane which is gaining increasing attention from all over the world.

Maree Izatt  
Snr Research Assistant / Physiotherapist

AND Dr Clayton Adam  
Snr Spine Research Fellow / Medical Engineer