

*“Providing research grants with the aim of improving the quality of care for musculoskeletal patients.”*



## THE PETE WILDE SCHOLARSHIP 2017

The Board of Directors of the International MDT Research Foundation is proud to announce the first recipient of the PETE WILDE Scholarship.



### **Margaret Campbell**

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from New Zealand

#### **Title:**

**Physiotherapists' participation in the McKenzie Institute's musculoskeletal mechanical diagnosis and therapy diploma programme: A qualitative descriptive inquiry.**

#### **Abstract**

**Background:** Increasingly health care providers including physiotherapists have been expected by their professional and regulatory bodies to undertake continual learning to develop both clinically and professionally. Additionally in response to changing health provision landscapes, within the allied health sector there has been greater emphasis on promotion of autonomous practice with the opportunity for expansion of physiotherapists' scope of practice. Musculoskeletal physiotherapists, through extended, advanced and specialist roles, have worked toward achieving recognition as musculoskeletal primary care providers of choice. Participation in postgraduate study has been indicated by physiotherapy governing bodies as an essential requirement for progression into these extended physiotherapy roles. An area of emerging research in musculoskeletal physiotherapy is

exploration into existing models of postgraduate education. The McKenzie Institute International is one group that provides postgraduate education and continued professional development for musculoskeletal practice. The McKenzie Institute's education framework involves completion of sequential competency programmes in Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy (MDT). The highest competency level is attainment of the Diploma in MDT.

**Objective:** Although MDT has been extensively researched in terms of reliability, efficacy and patient outcomes, to date there are no known studies that have focused on the McKenzie Institute's education programmes. This inquiry aimed to explore physiotherapists' perspectives on the experience of undertaking and successfully completing the McKenzie Institute International's diploma programme.

**Study Design and Methodology:** An exploratory qualitative descriptive approach was utilised. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nineteen MDT Diploma graduates. These were audio taped and then transcribed. A foundational thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data.

**Findings:** Three overarching themes emerged from the data. (1) "Trust and hope in the system" – Trust was articulated in the belief of MDT. Participants viewed the MDT system as an assured learning continuum and anticipated that participating further in the continuum would progress them. Hope in the system signified the desired consequences or outcomes that participation in the MDT diploma programme might bring. Being a better clinician, credibility and the possibility of becoming an educator were highlighted as the central aspirations to be gained by placing hope in the system. (2) "Learning to fully trust the system" – Described the participants learning journey. This encompassed their perceived challenges, development and evolution through the systems learning continuum which brought about expansion of practice insight and facilitated ongoing practice transformation. (3) "Beyond the system" – Represents what "learning to trust the system" has brought to participants following completion of the MDT diploma programme. Participation became a driver for change and development both beyond the mechanical and beyond being a clinician. Additionally it made participants feel more legitimised in the MDT community of practice, while also exposing them to new and broader communities of practice beyond MDT.

**Implications:** Findings may enhance the experience of future MDT learners considering undertaking the diploma programme. Additionally it may help inform the McKenzie Institute's ongoing development of the diploma education programme as well as expose the McKenzie Institute's educational framework to the wider musculoskeletal postgraduate education community.