Standing on strong foundations

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As I begin my term as Editor-in-Chief of JARNA, I would first like to acknowledge and thank Ali New for her leadership and commitment over the past four years. Ali has guided the journal through an important period of growth, strengthening its role as a respected platform for rehabilitation nursing scholarship, professional discussion and knowledge sharing. I am grateful to be building on the strong foundations she and previous editors have established.

In a recent guest editorial, I reflected on JARNA's journey from a member newsletter to the peer-reviewed professional journal it is today (Baker, 2024). As I prepared to take on this role, I found myself looking back once again, this time revisiting editorials published over the past 13 years. What began as a simple exercise to understand the journal's history quickly became something more significant. Reading the words of previous editors provided a fascinating window into the evolution of rehabilitation nursing and the enduring values that continue to shape our profession.

Across those editorials, I was struck by both the changes and the constants. Between 2013 and 2026, JARNA's pages documented the growth of rehabilitation nursing as a recognised field of practice and the journal's own maturation as a vehicle for scholarship, leadership and professional development. The journal has strengthened its peer-review processes, expanded opportunities for nurses to publish their work, and supported the dissemination of rehabilitation nursing knowledge. At the same time, the editorials reflected a growing recognition that rehabilitation is not confined to designated rehabilitation units but is a fundamental component of nursing practice across many healthcare settings.

One theme stood out above all others: the central importance of person-centred care. Time and again, editorials highlighted goal setting, enablement, therapeutic relationships, patient empowerment, shared decision-making and partnerships with families. As I read through these reflections, I was reminded that rehabilitation nursing has always been about much more than physical recovery. At its heart, our work focuses on helping people regain independence, maintain dignity, participate fully in life and achieve the best possible quality of life after illness or injury.

Another recurring theme was the importance of professional growth. Previous editors consistently emphasised evidence-based practice, research literacy, ongoing professional development and reflective practice. Over time, there was a stronger focus on leadership, mentorship, professional standards and the need for rehabilitation nurses to contribute to the evidence base through research and publication. These messages remain just as relevant today. As a profession, we have a responsibility not only to deliver excellent care but also to generate and share the knowledge that advances practice.

Editorials also captured the challenges and opportunities facing healthcare services. From 2020 onwards, there was an understandable focus on workforce pressures, innovation, resilience and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently, discussions have turned towards consumer engagement, co-design, home-based rehabilitation models and coaching approaches to care. I was particularly encouraged to see growing attention given to nurse wellbeing, psychological safety, supportive leadership and workforce sustainability. These conversations recognise an important truth: delivering high-quality rehabilitation care depends on supporting the wellbeing of the nurses who provide it.

What also emerged from this retrospective journey was a sense of optimism. Collectively, the editorials tell the story of a profession that is increasingly evidence-informed, collaborative, innovative, and committed to improving outcomes for both the people we care for and the workforce that supports them.

These themes align closely with the World Health Organization's Rehabilitation 2030 initiative, which calls for rehabilitation to be integrated across all levels of healthcare and supported by a strong multidisciplinary workforce that includes rehabilitation nurses (WHO, 2026). They also reflect the priorities that continue to shape rehabilitation nursing across Australasia: person-centred care, meaningful partnerships and evidence-informed practice.

This issue of JARNA reflects many of these themes. Readers will find articles exploring patient wellbeing in subacute rehabilitation services, the experiences of gay male nurses working in rehabilitation, strategies for promoting wellbeing in rehabilitation nursing and an ARNA member story. Together, these contributions highlight the diversity of perspectives, experiences and scholarship that enrich our profession.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am keen for JARNA to continue offering a space where rehabilitation nurses can share ideas, challenge assumptions, learn from one another, and showcase the important

work occurring across our profession. Whether you are reporting research findings, describing a quality improvement project, reflecting on clinical practice, sharing an educational initiative, or writing a letter to the editor, your contribution is valued.

Many of the articles published in JARNA start from a conversation about an idea, a clinical observation or a practice innovation. I encourage you to think about the work you are doing, the lessons you are learning, and the stories that could benefit others. By sharing our experiences and knowledge, we strengthen not only the journal but also the future of rehabilitation nursing itself.

References

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