



Rehabilitation R&D Progress Reports 1983

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At present, the Journal and the progress report annual publication are distributed free of charge, both in the United States and in foreign countries. Additions will be made to the mailing list upon request to:

The Editor
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Office of Technology Transfer (153D)
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252 Seventh Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10001

Although it is not required for addition to the mailing list, it will be appreciated if those asking to be placed on the list furnish the following information for our reader-demonstrations databank: degree; area of particular professional specialization, license, or practice; and whether currently actively involved in a program of research.

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A similar "Availability Announcement" will also be mailed for future issues of the Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development, the new four-times-a-year scientific journal which also issues from this office. Those announcements will include a 10-year list of available back-issues (with prices) for the former Bulletin of Prosthetics Research and, of course, for Journal back-issues in the future.

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On the cover: An artist's version of a three-dimensional representation, created by computer graphics, of a knee joint. (From Student Projects in the Development of Replacement Ligaments and Tendons, page 21)

A Program for Improving Access to Rehabilitation R&D Progress

SELDON P. TODD, JR.

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Rehabilitation R&D Progress Reports

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Rehabilitation researchers need better access to the published literature in the multidisciplinary field of rehabilitation research and development in order to stimulate and direct scientific and technical progress.

The Veterans Administration, through its Office of Technology Transfer, has initiated a program that will improve access to the existing knowledge and continuing progress in this area. The program includes four new elements:

1. The Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development — an interdisciplinary scientific and engineering quarterly, first published in July, 1983, which replaces the Bulletin of Prosthetics Research;
2. The Rehabilitation R&D Progress Reports — a comprehensive worldwide annual review of ongoing scientific research and engineering projects, of which this is the first issue;
3. The provision of indexes to relevant international scientific literature; and
4. A technically based periodical tailored specifically to the needs of practicing clinicians.

The Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development is designed to provide a multidisciplinary approach to the publication of scientific and engineering papers. Traditionally, researchers have published in journals representing their specific fields. This practice has yielded a literature containing a substantial body of knowledge confined to journals generally read only by members of a particular discipline. Thus, it has become practically impossible for professionals to keep abreast of progress in the rehabilitation field as a whole. Cross-fertilization among the many basic disciplines has fallen far short of its potential. Clinical leaders do not have ready access to new techniques that could be adopted usefully and safely into practice.

The Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development serves to fill this gap by presenting scientific papers of interest to rehabilitation professionals in a style of technical writing that is acceptable to dedicated specialists and understandable to leaders in the full range of the rehabilitation disciplines. Special emphasis is given to rehabilitation engineering developments, too few of which have previously appeared in well-circulated publications.

To assure quality, all articles are refereed by appropriate members of the Journal's Editorial Board and selected ad hoc reviewers. We are committed to offer our contributors the advantages of publication in a high-quality refereed scientific/engineering journal which reaches the full rehabilitation community. Thus, the Journal is widely disseminated within the United States and in foreign countries. The Journal is distributed upon request and, in most cases, without charge. Authors are to receive a generous supply of free reprints to further facilitate dissemination.

The Rehabilitation R&D Progress Reports, beginning with this issue, present an annual summary of ongoing work. This information is intended to facilitate communication in advance of project completion and publication of final results. The progress reports also offer a state-of-the-art perspective of activities in the field of rehabilitation research and development. This can be most useful to those with policy planning responsibilities, as well as those whose activities and opportunities may be affected by the policies and plans.

The purpose of the Rehabilitation R&D Progress Reports require different standards of content from those applied to articles in the Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development. The progress reports identify the researcher, organizational affiliation, and sponsor in a way that invites readers to solicit more information directly from the investigators. Project descriptions give substantive but brief summaries of goals, progress, and future plans. Detailed information on experimental design and research procedure is not included in the progress reports; such material is appropriate for scientific articles.

Preliminary results of a project may be included in a progress report, but they are not intended to convey "new scientific information." Scientific findings, to be accepted as valid additions to the literature, must allow for replication through full reporting of experimental design, data reporting, data analysis, and interpretation. Such an in-depth presentation is not possible nor desired in the progress reports. The reports describe "working hypotheses" and identify ongoing commitments of scientists and engineers involved in the pursuit and testing of those hypotheses. Prejudgment of the outcome of preliminary results would be inconsistent with the purpose and scope of the progress reports. Moreover, it would ignore the fact that many valuable scientific discoveries occur when final experimental data turn up unexpected or surprising results.

Through the third element of the program, the Office of Technology Transfer is committed to the goal of making available comprehensive searches and access to indexes of relevant scientific and engineering literature from worldwide sources. Under development now are (i) descriptive guides for effective and economical scientific literature searches, including the use of computerized reference services and (ii) annotated bibliographic indexes in selected topical areas. In the long term, desktop computer-terminal selective searches of the full body of world rehabilitation literature could be the most effective method of attaining this goal.

The potential value of "unlocking" the foreign literature is an exciting part of our program. This issue of the Rehabilitation R&D Progress Reports implements our goal of providing the English language

reader access to rehabilitation literature from other countries. Systematic dissemination of existing indexes of foreign literature, and regular publication in the Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development of foreign articles not otherwise available in English translation, are also future goals.

Developing a technically based periodical tailored specifically to the needs of practicing clinicians is in the conceptual phase and represents the fourth element in our program to disseminate research information. It will be designed in coordination with professional organizations, in order to build upon and be supportive of ongoing efforts.

The VA Office of Technology Transfer is committed to improving access to the interdisciplinary literature in the field of rehabilitation research and development. The program outlined here is ambitious and to achieve it will take time, ingenuity, resources, and the full support of the rehabilitation community ■