

Journal of Asian Rehabilitation Science

Vol.1 No.1 April 2018



The Society of Asian Rehabilitation Science

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The Journal of Asia Rehabilitation Science (ISSN 2434-07058) is published for the Society of Asia Rehabilitation Science. The journal is published quarterly.

The editors welcome original papers with significant areas of physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

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Other

Current Situation of Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and Its Educational Relationship with Japan

THANDA AYE, RPT, PhD^{1, 2)*}, KHIN SAW OO, MD, PhD³⁾, MYO THUZAR KHIN, MD, PhD²⁾, TSUGUMI KURAMOTO-AHUJA, RPT, MA¹⁾, HITOSHI MARUYAMA, RPT, PhD¹⁾

1) *International University of Health and Welfare, Japan*

2) *University of Medical Technology, Yangon, Ministry of Health and Sports, Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Lower Mingalardon Road, Aung San, Insein, Yangon, Myanmar*

3) *University of Medicine 2, Yangon, Ministry of Health and Sports, Republic of the Union of Myanmar*

Abstract. The government of Myanmar has promoted substantial changes in its support of persons with disabilities. There were 2.3 million people with disabilities in Myanmar, accounting for 4.6% of the total population. Three ministries have been providing medical, social, and vocational rehabilitation services. The team approach has been provided through different assessments and evaluations by the team members. This paper aims to describe a brief history and the current situation of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and the educational relationship between the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and Japan for faculty development. The rehabilitation services and education started in Myanmar in the 1950s. Rehabilitation services are being provided in both public and private health facilities. There are seven public universities for training and production of members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team. Human resources overseas training programs for the government employees of the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team have been provided since 1956. The educational relationship between the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and Japan has been founded by technical and financial supports in human resources training for the members of the team. In conclusion, the educational programs for the necessary healthcare professionals are essential for further improvement of service provision by the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team.

(This article was submitted Feb. 19, 2018, and was accepted Mar. 12, 2018)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar (hereafter Myanmar) is a country located in South-East Asia¹⁾. Myanmar is bounded by some countries on the landward side, which are Bangladesh and India on the northwest, China on the north and northeast, and Laos and Thailand on the east and southeast. The west and south of Myanmar are bounded by 1760 miles of coast by the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, respectively¹⁾. Myanmar is a union nation made up of eight major ethnic groups, which comprise 135 national races with their own languages and cultures¹⁾. Myanmar is divided administratively into 15 regions, which are one union territory, seven states, and seven regions^{1, 2)}. The total population of Myanmar was 51.4 million on March 29, 2014^{1, 2)}.

*Corresponding author: Thanda Aye (15s3027@g.iuhw.ac.jp, jinhua06@gmail.com)

The government of Myanmar has promoted substantial changes in its support of persons with disabilities (PWD), a commitment reflected at both the international and national levels³. The national disability rate of Myanmar according to the 2014 Myanmar population and housing census was 4.6% of the total population³. Among 2.3 million PWD, 46% were male, and 54% were female. Seventy-eight percent of PWD were living in a rural areas³.

Rehabilitation services have been provided for PWD in Myanmar through institutional and community-based rehabilitation since the 1950s. Three ministries—the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS); the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR); and the Ministry of Defence—have been providing medical, social, and vocational rehabilitation services for PWD⁴. The MOHS has more responsibility for providing medical care and medical rehabilitation services while the MSWRR is mainly responsible for social and vocational rehabilitation services for all civilians across the country⁴. The Ministry of Defence has responsibilities for providing medical, social, and vocational rehabilitation services for its employees and families at its own facilities.

The team approach has been emphasized to coordinate care for PWD. Different assessments and evaluations are brought together to obtain the problems of patients or PWD by the members of the rehabilitation team. The members of the rehabilitation team are doctors of physical medicine and rehabilitation (rehabilitation medicine doctors or physiatrists), physiotherapists (PTs), occupational therapists (OTs), speech therapists (STs), prosthetists and orthotists (POs), rehabilitation nurses, medical social workers, and clinical psychologists. There are absence of STs, certified rehabilitation nurses, and clinical psychologists, in addition to dearth of OTs and medical social workers on the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team because of lack of educational programs for those professionals in Myanmar. The majority of the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team are government employees of the MOHS. The rehabilitation services are being provided by the collaborative and coordinated activities of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team with other national and international organizations. The current plans and challenges of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team are faculty development, career development, research culture cultivation, and awareness for disability prevention.

As Myanmar is a developing country, various technical and financial support from the developed world is prerequisite to implement the current plans of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team. Japan is a developed country that has been assisting Myanmar in various fields to support Myanmar's efforts for reforms towards democratization, national reconciliation, and sustainable development. Japan has also assisted the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team for implementing the plans of the team, especially in faculty development. The Myanmar Rehabilitation Team has been supported by recruitment of necessary professionals and strengthening of existing professionals of the members of the team.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a brief history and the current situation of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and the educational relationship between the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and Japan for faculty development.

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MYANMAR REHABILITATION TEAM

The rehabilitation services and education started in Myanmar in the 1950s.

2.1. History of major institutions for medical rehabilitation

A board for PWD, administered under the Ministry of Social Welfare (now MSWRR), was formed by the executive order of the government of Myanmar in 1953. The board aimed for PWD to learn vocational activities to enrich their lives. For that reason, a vocational school, a hospital for PWD named the “Hospital for Amputees,” and a workshop for prostheses were built in Yangon in 1953 and 1954. The Hospital for Amputees was formally opened under the Ministry of Social Welfare in December of 1959. The hospital has been providing medical rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and other rehabilitation services including prosthetic and orthotic services since that time. The Hospital for Amputees was handed over from the Ministry of Social Welfare to the Ministry of Health (now MOHS) and renamed the “Hospital for Disabled” in January of 1965. The name of the hospital was changed from the “Hospital for Disabled” to the National

Table 1. Institutions and courses for physiatrists in Myanmar

Program		Term	Institutions	Foundation	Remark
Postgraduate Diploma	Dip. Med. Sc (Medical Rehabilitation)	1 year	University of Medicine 1, Yangon	1998	Until 1999 2 Batches
Master	M. Med. Sc (Rehabilitation Medicine)	2 years/ 3 years	University of Medicine 1, Yangon	2001	
			University of Medicine 2, Yangon	2013	
			University of Medicine Mandalay	2006	
			Defence Service Medical Academy, Yangon	2008	
Doctorate	Dr. Med. Sc (Rehabilitation Medicine)	3 years	University of Medicine 1	2003	
			University of Medicine 2	2017	
			University of Medicine Mandalay	2013	
			Defence Service Medical Academy	2018	

Dip. Med. Sc: Diploma of Medical Sciences

M. Med. Sc: Master of Medical Sciences

Dr. Med. Sc: Doctor of Medical Sciences

Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) in 1992. The NRH is the first founded rehabilitation center and has become one of the major rehabilitation institutions under the MOHS in Myanmar.

The department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, which is also one of the major rehabilitation institutions in Myanmar, was established in 1958 at Yangon General Hospital (YGH), which is a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Medicine 1, Yangon, and medical rehabilitation and physiotherapy services have been provided since then⁵. The other two major rehabilitation institutions are located in Mandalay General Hospital (established in 1962) and North Okkalapa General Hospital (established in 1970)⁶, which are teaching hospitals affiliated with the University of Medicine, Mandalay, and the University of Medicine 2, Yangon, respectively.

2.2. History of education programs for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team

2.2.1. Education programs for physiatrists

The one-year program of the postgraduate diploma course in medical rehabilitation for medical doctors was provided at the University of Medicine 1, Yangon, in 1998 and 1999. There were 16 doctors who got the diploma of medical rehabilitation. The two-year master's program in rehabilitation medicine was established at all four medical universities after 2000. The master's program was extended into a three-year program in 2014. The three-year doctoral program in rehabilitation medicine was established at all four medical universities from 2003 to 2018. Around 160 doctors got the diploma and/or master's degrees, and more than 10 got the doctoral degrees as of December of 2017. Table 1 shows the courses and foundation years of the institutions for physiatrists.

2.2.2. Education programs for PTs

The first school of physiotherapy was established with the support of the British Colombo plan at YGH in 1960 and provided a two-year diploma course with training by Mr. Malcolm Peat, who was a registered PT as well as an advisor of the British Colombo plan from the United Kingdom (UK). The entry level of that course was university second-year students or bachelor's degree holders from the local universities of arts and sciences. A total of 18 PTs graduated from that school.

Table 2. Institutions and courses for PTs in Myanmar

Program	Term	Institutions	Foundation	Remark
Diploma	2 years	School of Physiotherapy	1960	only one Batch
	4 years/ 2 years	School of Paramedical Sciences	1964	until 1991
Bachelor (Bridge)	2 years	Institute of Paramedical Sciences	1992	until 1994
Bachelor	4 years	University of Medical Technology, Yangon	1993	
		University of Medical Technology, Mandalay	2000	
		Military Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences, Yangon	2002	
Master	2 years	University of Medical Technology, Yangon	2003	
		University of Medical Technology, Mandalay	2010	
		Military Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences, Yangon	2009	

DPMS: Diploma of Paramedical Sciences

B. P. Sc: Bachelor of Paramedical Sciences

B. Med. Tech: Bachelor of Medical Technology

M. Med. Tech: Master of Medical Technology

In November of 1964, the first Institute of Paramedical Sciences, Yangon (IPMSY), was established under the Ministry of Health (now MOHS) with the support of the British Colombo plan and provided four-year diploma courses in physiotherapy⁷⁾. The trainers of that institute were experts from foreign countries and internationally trained local experts. The training years of the courses were reduced from four to two in 1986, and diploma courses were provided until 1991⁷⁾. A total of 125 PTs got a diploma from that institute until 1991.

The curricula for the courses of Paramedical Sciences were upgraded at the IPMSY in December of 1991. From September of 1992 to 1994, the IPMSY offered a two-year bridge course to allow those who had finished the diploma course to become bachelor's degree holders⁷⁾.

A four-year bachelor's degree course has been started at the IPMSY for those who pass the high school national examination or national matriculation examination with science and who have obtained the necessary marks of the national matriculation examination for the entry criteria of the institute in 1993⁷⁾. The second Institute of Paramedical Sciences was founded in Mandalay as the IPMSM, located in the middle part of Myanmar, also under the Ministry of Health (now MOHS) in 2000. The third Institute of Paramedical Sciences was founded in Yangon under the Ministry of Defence as the Military Institute of Paramedical Sciences (MINP) in 2000 and has provided a four-year bachelor's degree course in physiotherapy since 2002. The IPMSY and IPMSM were renamed as the University of Medical Technology, Yangon and Mandalay (UMTY and UMTM), respectively, in 2005. The title of the bachelor's degree was also changed from Bachelor of Paramedical Sciences (B. P. Sc.) to Bachelor of Medical Technology (B. Med. Tech.). The two-year master's program was first established in the IPMSY (UMTY) in December of 2003. The two-year master's programs were also established at the MINP in 2009 and UMTM in 2010. The total numbers of bachelor's degree graduates in physiotherapy from the UMTY, UMTM, and MINP as of December of 2017 are 745, 537, and 170, respectively. The numbers of master's degree holders from the UMTY, UMTM, and MINP as of December of 2017 are 44, 11, and 24, respectively. Table 2 shows the courses and foundation year of the institutions for PT.

Table 3. Institution and course for POs in Myanmar

Program	Term	Institutions	Foundation
Bachelor B. Med. Tech (Prosthetics and Orthotics)	4 years	University of Medical Technology, Yangon	2015

B. Med. Tech: Bachelor of Medical Technology

2.2.3. Education programs for POs

The department of Prosthetics and Orthotics was established as one major subject at the UMTY with the support of the Exceed Worldwide and Nippon foundation in January of 2015. The department offers a four-year bachelor’s program for PO, which is the category 2 standard of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO), and provided by an international team led by Cambodian graduates from Cambodian School of Prosthetics and Orthotics⁸⁾ (Table 3). The first intake students were those who had passed the first-year courses from the UMTY and UMTM. There are currently 11 bachelor’s degree holders for PO in December of 2017.

3. CURRENT SITUATION OF THE MYANMAR REHABILITATION TEAM

3.1. Rehabilitation facilities

Rehabilitation services are being provided in both public and private health facilities. The public health facilities are categorized into hospitals for curative and rehabilitative services, health centers and school health teams for preventive and public health services, and traditional medicine hospitals and clinics^{1, 9)}. The categories of the public hospitals are general hospitals (up to 2,000 beds), specialist and teaching hospitals (100–1,200 beds), regional/state and district hospitals (200–500 beds), township hospitals (25–100 beds), and station hospitals (16–25 beds)^{1, 9)}. The types of private health facilities are private hospitals, private specialist clinics, and private general clinics⁹⁾. Rehabilitation services can be limitedly provided in the hospitals from the general hospitals to the regional/state and district hospitals levels in the public settings under the MOHS.

3.2. Education for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team

The different categories of health care professionals, including some categories of rehabilitation team members, which are physiatrist, PT, and PO, for the whole population are being trained and produced by 15 medical and allied universities of the MOHS and the Ministry of Education (MOE) and two medical and allied universities of the Ministry of Defence^{1, 9)}. There are four medical universities (three under the MOHS and MOE and one under the Ministry of Defence) for training and production of physiatrists and three allied universities (two under the MOHS and MOE and one under the Ministry of Defence) for PTs. Among those seven universities, one (same as for PTs) is also providing bachelor’s programs for POs. Master’s and doctoral programs for physiatrists and bachelor’s and master’s programs for PTs are currently being provided in those seven universities. There is no private university in Myanmar for training all health care professionals.

The entry level of education for the bachelor’s programs in all 15 universities under the MOHS and MOE is a high school graduation certificate based on the marks obtained at the high school national examination or national matriculation examination and the order of merit by the applicants. There is no entrance examination by the individual universities except the two universities under the Ministry of Defence. The

Table 4. Human resources overseas training for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team

Professions	Courses	Term	Countries	Year	Number of candidates
Physiatrists	Diploma	2 years/ 1 year	USA	1956	1
			UK	1962-1997	7
	Doctorate	5 years	Japan	1994-1995	2
			Australia	2016	1
PTs	Diploma	2 years	USA	1956	1
			UK	1965-1973	6
	Bachelor	4 years	Australia	1959	1
			UK	1962	2
	Master	2 years	Japan	2013-2014	2
			Thailand	2016-2017	3
	Doctorate	3 years	Japan	2015	1
			Thailand	2014-2018	8
OTs	Certificate	6 months	India	1956	2
	Bachelor	4 years	UK	1975	1
			Japan	2017	1
	Master	2 years	Japan	2014-2015	2
STs	Bachelor	4 years	Japan	2017	1
POs	Certificate	1 year	Cambodia	2017	2
	Diploma	3 years	Cambodia	2000-2012	11
	Bachelor	4 years	Australia	1980s	1
		3 years	Cambodia	2013-2014	8
		2 years (upgrading course)	Thailand	2012-2016	3
Rehabilitation Nurses	Certificate	6 months	UK	1977	1
	Diploma	2 years	USA	1956	1

principles for entry into master's and doctoral programs are generally the same in all 17 universities. For capacity building, candidates from different disciplines have been selected and sent for overseas training for doctoral, master's, and diploma programs as well as for short-term training^{1, 9)}. All health care professionals have to join the civil service to pursue master's and doctorate degrees in the 17 local universities and most overseas scholarship programs^{1, 9)}.

3.3. Employment for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team

The MOHS is the key player in the public sector for the production, utilization, and governing of the civilian health workforce including the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team^{1, 9)}. The public-sector health workforce is recruited by the central government's Union Civil Service Board as well as by the state/region governments⁹⁾. The employment rules and regulations were applied for all public health facilities⁹⁾. The Ministry of Defence is also responsible for the production, utilization, and governing of the military health workforce from its own two universities.

The recruitment systems and the benefit packages offered to the health workforce are designed at each health facility in the private sector⁹⁾. The private health facility employment is more attractive in terms of being located in urban areas, offering a higher salary, and providing better working conditions, although there are disadvantages to getting the opportunities of postgraduate diploma, master's, and doctorate programs in the local universities⁹⁾.

3.4. Professional organizations for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team

The Society of Rehabilitation Medicine, which organized all members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team but mainly for physiatrists, was established under the Myanmar Medical Association in 2000. The president and the executive committee members are physiatrists¹⁰⁾. The professional association for PTs was founded as the Myanmar Physiotherapy Association (MPA) in August 2013, and the MPA became the provisional member of the Asian Western Pacific region of the World Confederation of Physical Therapy in 2016¹¹⁾. The professional association for POs was founded as the ISPO member society in Myanmar in 2013¹²⁾.

3.5. Human resources overseas training for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team

Human resources overseas training programs for the government employees among the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team have been provided since 1956 (Table 4).

Five pioneers were sent to Bellevue Medical Center, New York, the United States of America for a two-year program of training on rehabilitation in September of 1956. One medical doctor and one nurse from the Ministry of Health (now MOHS) were trained to be a physiatrist and rehabilitation nurse, respectively; one student from a medical university was trained to be a PT; one student from the government technical institute was trained to be a PO; and one staff member from the Ministry of Social Welfare (now MSWRR) was trained to be a medical social worker. One month later, in October of 1956, two government staff members were sent to Bombay, India, for six months of short-term occupational therapy training.

From 1959 to 1962, one Myanmar student was sent to the Queensland University in Australia for a bachelor's degree in physiotherapy. In 1962, two students were selected among the 18 diploma holders from the School of Physiotherapy and sent as scholarship students of the British Colombo plan to the University of Leeds and the University of Bradford in the UK for training physiotherapy from 1962 to 1964. The two students became members of the chartered society of physiotherapy in the UK. They were also allowed to attend at the University of London for the diploma in teaching physiotherapy (Dip TP) course from 1965 to 1966. In 1975, one government employee was sent to the School of Occupational Therapy, Edinburgh, Scotland, for a bachelor's degree program in OT. In the early 1980s, one government employee was sent to La Trobe University, Australia, for the bachelor's degree program of PO.

4. EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MYANMAR REHABILITATION TEAM AND JAPAN

The first and earliest educational relationship on rehabilitation between the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and Japan was started by sending two medical doctors to the University of Tsukuba, Japan, for a five-year doctorate course in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation with the scholarship program by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology around 1994–1995.

The second relationship was founded as a project on development of human resources in the field of healthcare in Myanmar in 2008. The project on “Strengthening of Rehabilitation in Myanmar” was implemented at the NRH and YGH under the Ministry of Health (now MOHS) of Myanmar by the collaboration with National Rehabilitation Center for PWD, Japan International Cooperation Agency

(JICA), and International University of Health and Welfare (IUHW) of Japan from 2008 to 2013¹³⁻¹⁵. The main purpose of the project was to improve techniques of rehabilitation specialists and expand opportunities for access to basic medicine for PWDs in Myanmar¹³. There were three main activities of the project¹³. The first was improving the training system at the NRH by developing talented personnel involved in rehabilitation services¹³. The second was upgrading the NRH into a barrier-free environment, providing rehabilitation aids, and implementing practical training of therapeutic methods¹³. The third activity of the project was building and enhancing networks for rehabilitation personnel to strengthen the cooperation among the NRH, the MSWRR, and other agencies in Myanmar¹³. The project also provided local training programs for Myanmar PTs as training for trainers for spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, and stroke at the NRH in 2010, 2011, and 2012, respectively. The lecturers of the training programs were nine Japanese experts (one physiatrist, four PTs, three OTs, one ST) and local experts. The project also provided short-term study visits for medical doctors, PTs, and nurses of Myanmar in Japan during the project period. The types of study visits were “Medical rehabilitation development” for three trainees (three physiatrists) in 2009, “Rehabilitation service for acute to chronic phase” for five trainees (two physiatrists and three PTs) in 2009, “Medical staff training course A” for five trainees (five PTs) in 2010, “Rehabilitation team approach for spinal cord injury” for eight trainees (two physiatrists, four PTs, and two nurses) in 2010, “Rehabilitation team approach for cerebral palsy” for eight trainees (two physiatrists, four PTs, and two nurses) in 2011, “Rehabilitation team approach for stroke” for nine trainees (three physiatrists, four PTs, and two nurses) in 2012, and “Medical staff training course B” for five trainees (five PTs) three times each in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

The third relationship was established in 2012 as an academic interaction agreement of IUHW with three medical universities in Yangon under the Ministry of Health (now MOHS), which are the University of Medicine 1, the UMTY, and the University of Nursing¹⁵. The purpose of the agreement is “to strengthen the mutual exchange of faculty members and students between the two countries”¹⁵. To support development of human resources in the field of healthcare in Myanmar, IUHW has supported a scholarship system that widely covers the costs from tuition fees to living expenses for long- and short-term study programs for Myanmar students since 2013¹⁵. Sixteen government employees of the MOHS received IUHW scholarships for long-term study in Japan from 2013 to 2017. Seven members (seven PTs) of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team were awarded the IUHW scholarship during this period, one for a three-year doctoral program in physical therapy, two for a two-year master’s program in physical therapy, two for a two-year master’s program in occupational therapy, and another two for four-year undergraduate programs in occupational therapy and speech therapy (speech, hearing, and language therapy). IUHW also provided a short-term training course for 10 Myanmar health care professionals, including three members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team (one physiatrist and two PTs) in Japan for six weeks in 2015. The IUHW rehabilitation training center was founded in the NRH in 2016, and a three-day program of the first and second IUHW rehabilitation seminars for some of the rehabilitation team members (physiatrists and PTs) were held at the training center in August 2016 and 2017. The purpose of the seminar was to improve knowledge and skills on early rehabilitation for the members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team. The trainers of the seminar were faculty members of IUHW (physiatrists/ rehabilitation medicine doctors, PTs, OTs, and STs) and the JICA senior overseas volunteer OT of NRH. Several members of the JICA senior overseas volunteer OTs have been providing rehabilitation services at the NRH and YGH since 2014.

The fourth relationship was formed as holding international meetings of the Japanese Society of Physical Therapy Science (SPTS) in Myanmar since 2015¹⁶. The purposes of the international meeting are to promote physical therapy science by sharing knowledge of academic, clinical, and research activities and to strengthen mutual relationships between the SPTS and international organizations¹⁶. The SPTS held the 17th international meeting in collaboration with the MPA in September of 2015 and the 23rd international meeting with the UMTY in August of 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar¹⁶.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper briefly describes the history and current situation of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and the educational relationship between the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team and Japan. There is serious a shortage and lack of necessary healthcare professionals in the Myanmar rehabilitation team. The educational programs for those healthcare professionals, such as OTs, STs, rehabilitation nurses, medical social workers, and clinical psychologists, are essential for further improvement of service provision of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team. The supports from the government of Myanmar and international organizations are needed for the establishment of training and production of those healthcare professionals for the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team.

A part of this paper was presented at the second international meeting of the Asian Rehabilitation Science (ISSN 1341-1667).

Funding and Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge Ms. San San Nwe (PT from MPA), Captain Myo Thein Tun (PT from MINP), Ms. Yamin Aye (OT from NRH), Ms. Chuon Saroth (PO from Exceed team at NRH), and the other members of the Myanmar Rehabilitation Team for sharing necessary information for this paper.

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