

Interview

Dr. Jiao is a rehabilitation physician at the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia. He and his team have just started a new multidisciplinary day therapy service for the management of Functional Neurological Disorder. The team includes physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, dieticians and psychologists.

Tell us about your background: Where are you from? Where do you work?

I am a rehabilitation medicine physician working in the Gold Coast at Robina Private Hospital and Gold Coast Private Hospital (Queensland, Australia). Robina Private is the one where we are setting up our FND service.

How did you get interested in Functional Neurological Disorder?

My first exposure to FND was in the public hospital as a registrar. FND was always in most people's "too difficult basket" including myself. Over time, as I reluctantly saw more FND patients, I started to notice that some patients recovered remarkably well and others did not improve at all. This sparked my curiosity to look into it more and ask - what did we do right? what did we do wrong? How can we do things better? It does not look like it's going out of fashion anytime soon so maybe we need to put more effort into it.

Tell us about the FND service you have set up at the Gold Coast. Can you tell us a bit about the process how you have set the service up?

We are still very much in the early stages of setting up our FND outpatient service at Robina Private Hospital. I cannot say we are fully setup due to staffing issues but we have a small but very capable and enthusiastic team of nurses, allied health staff, and doctors who are always up for a challenge. We have had a few small "wins" with our FND inpatients, which has brought more awareness and confidence to our staff. Since Robina is a small private hospital, we have been very fortunate to have a direct line with management that is very much aligned with our ideals of creating and providing services where it is needed.

What were the biggest hurdles in setting up the service?

So far, it is building the team. We need the best in every field. It is like the movie Ocean's Eleven: Right now we're recruiting for the best safecracker - the Psychologist. If anyone is interested, please get in touch!

What would you change about the service if you could and what are you most proud of?

I do not think we have enough mileage at this point to retrospect. I am most proud of my team - past and present.

What are your plans for the future?

My plan is to finally get this service up and running at 100% and incorporate our robotics and virtual reality treatment for our FND patients at Robina Private Hospital.

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What advice do you have for other health practitioners who are thinking about setting up an FND service?

- Determine if there is a need for it.
- Determine if you can or - more importantly - want to meet this need.
- Find people and other services you can learn from.
- Do not do it alone. Find allies. It takes a village.
- Pitch the idea to management in a language they can understand.
- Be patient.



Dr. Jiao and his team at the Gold Coast In Queensland, Australia.