

2012 Barbara Knothe Burn Therapist Achievement Award

Sydney Jane Thornton, OTR



Sydney Jane Thornton, OTR/L, has been a dedicated and contributing Occupational Therapist for over 41 years of clinical practice. For more than 31 of these years, she has been specifically focused on the rehabilitation of children and adult burn survivors at the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center and has served as the cornerstone rehabilitation leader for this burn team.

Sydney was a pioneer in upper extremity prosthetic training and rehabilitation following digit replantation surgery in her early career and thrived in rehabilitating the most difficult crush, amputation or mutilating hand injuries. She was invited to be part of the keystone meetings for hand therapists that later resulted in establishment of 2 fundamental hand therapy organizations: the *American Society of Hand Therapists* and the *Philadelphia Hand Society & Conference*. In addition to the American Society of Hand Therapists, Sydney's has also been an active member in the American Occupational Therapy Association, North Carolina Occupational Therapy Association, and the American Burn Association throughout her career.

Sydney is chapter author for three essential clinical texts spanning multiple medical disciplines: Upper Extremity Amputee- Prosthetic Training Programs in the *Rehabilitation of the Hand: Surgery & Therapy*, Post Operative Management in Replantation, for the *American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons* and Enabling Life Roles after Severe Burns for the *American Occupational Therapy Association*. Sydney has also authored articles in both the *Journal of Burn Care and Rehabilitation* and the *Annals of Plastic Surgery*.

However, Sydney's most enjoyed contributions are realized in her participation in oral presentations, lectures and hands on teachings in burn care which reflect a life-long devotion to burn rehabilitation science, education, and aftercare. Sydney has been an active contributor to the Southern Region Burn Conference, North Carolina Occupational Therapy Conference, World Burn Congress and AOTA's *Burn Rehabilitation Workshop*. Moreover, Sydney's' devotion to burn care extends to the generations of students, therapists, nurses and surgeons who have been fortunate to have her as an instructor and mentor for burn rehabilitation. Many have gone on continue working with burn survivors and have developed into key burn clinicians and educators; yet all have left much richer and knowledgeable from the experience. In both the classroom and the clinic, Sydney has been able to demonstrate by example and practice the vital links between academia and practice.

Sydney endears herself to her patients and their families through her advocacy and devotion in helping them to achieve maximum functional recovery. Sydney is known for doing what it takes to provide for her patients and it is not uncommon to meet a burn survivor in North Carolina for whom Sydney has been nothing short of a lifelong good friend. Her sheer talent, work ethic, and selflessness serve as motivation to the multitudes of patients and coworkers she inspires daily. It is this unyielding dedication to burn rehabilitation and fundamental application of this philosophy which makes Sydney an essential resource to the burn community and a beacon of clinical burn rehabilitation.