

2014 Barbara Knothe Burn Therapist Achievement Award

Cheryl A. Hanley, OTR/L



Cheryl A. Hanley, OTR/L has been an Occupational Therapist for over 35 years and she has been practicing in burns for over 20 years. She began her burn career as the coordinator of Occupational Therapy at the Oakland Children's Hospital and has spent the last 17 years as Supervisor of Occupational and Physical Therapy at the Shriners' Hospital for Children in Northern California. In addition to her full time role, she also has served as adjunct faculty at Samuel Merit College in the Occupational Therapy Department and volunteered on multiple pediatric burn missions to developing countries. Most recently, Cheryl has been appointed to the Board of Directors at the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation where she has made her mark as volunteer, liaison, counselor and support staff for this pediatric burn camp. She has been active member of both the American Occupational Therapy Association for over 35 years and the American Burn Association for over 20 years and has achieved the advanced practice certification in both swallowing and hand therapy disciplines.

Cheryl Hanley may not be a name that is immediately familiar to all, primarily because she does not put herself center stage in presentations, publications or other notable roles of recognition. However, for over 20 years, she has been a vital "behind the scenes" supporter of the crucial work that moves burn rehabilitation ahead. Cheryl is a hands-on leader. She was instrumental in the development of a new burn unit ICU/ rehab division at her hospital early in her career and as manager has continued to shepherd the development and successes of her entire rehabilitation team. She champions ongoing clinical education, supports department development projects and important burn rehabilitation research in a time when financial resources are often lessened for such programs. She is creative in her approach to advocating for her department and always puts Physical and Occupational Therapy staff as a priority more often than not, sacrificing her ability to participate so that her team and burns are never left without.

Providing therapy is not enough for her, Cheryl continues to work above and beyond to support the families in whatever way is needed throughout the recovery process. She plays a very active role in the reintegration of the patient to both school and society and continues to maintain close contacts with many of her patients through years of burn camp involvement. As Cheryl progressed into a supervisory position, her core essence as the backbone of the department really shone. She encouraged therapists to achieve whatever they set their mind or heart to and helped them to carve the way for success and flourish in their careers.

Support is something that is often under-recognized in success. Behind every successful person, there is a support system that has made their achievements possible. Cheryl is one such unique support individual. She has been the inner foundation of the rehabilitation department at her hospital which has emboldened many therapists over the years to move burn research, education and clinical care forward and she fully exemplifies the spirit of this award with her humble leadership and amazing, unyielding support of the burn patient and burn therapy community as a whole.