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## **Persistence pays off for Patient and Physio team**

The perseverance and dedication of a Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital patient and a team of physiotherapists that worked with him has been recognised by the Australian Physiotherapy Association with a prestigious award.

Bob Simonovic, 75, of Yagoona, was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome in March 2009. The autoimmune condition is a form of nerve inflammation, resulting in a spreading paralysis, which required Mr Simonovic to be treated in Intensive Care for six weeks.

Despite persistent rehabilitation work over four months, Mr Simonovic was still unable to move his limbs functionally, and required full assistance for all activities of daily living.

He was discharged from the Hospital to a nursing home where, for a year and a half, he worked tirelessly with a team of physiotherapists, doctors and healthcare professionals to achieve the goal of independence and returning home to live with his wife.

Head of Physiotherapy at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital Jenny Jacka said reports from staff of Mr Simonovic's persistence in rehabilitation was extraordinary.

"Bob achieved a remarkable number of repetitions during this six week stay in rehabilitation," she said.

"He spent all day in the rehabilitation gym and did the majority of his exercises independently following assistance for set-up. During this time he was an inspiration to other patients in the gym as he exercised all day, every day."

In September 2010, Mr Simonovic was discharged from Hospital and was able to return home to live independently with his wife.

Now, almost five years since his journey began, Mr Simonovic still visits the Outpatient Open Gym at the Hospital and has set up an exercise area in his garage at home where he continues to improve his strength and fitness.

"At first in the hospital I was thinking I would beat it but I didn't know how," Mr Simonovic said.

"Then someone said that the problem is the wire around the nerves and you have to do a lot of exercise to make the nerves and the muscles grow back. When I went to the nursing home I was always moving, I would wake up in the night time and exercise, same

in the day, always moving. Now I have much better feeling in my foot but I want to get more feeling and better movement so that I can drive again.”

Mr Simonovic and his team were nominated for the APA National Neurology Group IPSEN Neurological Physiotherapy Award for Achievement because of their persistence.

“This is a time when most people would certainly have given up,” nominating physiotherapist Dr Simone Dorsch said.

“Having the ability to continue to work without the support of a rehabilitation environment is very unusual and demonstrates a unique belief in his own ability to change his outcome.”

### **Photo Opportunity:**

Patient Bob Simonovic and physiotherapy staff Karl Schurr, Etesa Polman and Julie Nugent will be presented with the APA National Neurology Group IPSEN Neurological Physiotherapy Award for Achievement at a special morning tea at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital on Wednesday, December 4 at 11:30am.

Chair of the NSW Chapter of the National Neurology Group Dr Lisa Harvey and General Manager of Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital Chris Leahy will present the award. Also present will be Bob’s Geriatrician – Dr Kevin Johnstone and other multidisciplinary team members who were a vital part of Bob’s journey – including Occupational Therapy staff and Nursing staff.