OBITUARY

Clemens Franzmayr

18 October 1938–22 December 2015

With the death of Clemens Alfonz Franz Franzmayr on 22 December 2015, musculoskeletal medicine in New Zealand lost one of its most compassionate, colourful, and experienced exponents.

Clemens trained in non-trauma orthopaedic medicine and surgery in Germany, and this training included extensive instruction and experience in manual medicine techniques. Clemens’ compassionate nature was displayed when, as a young German, he was involved with international friendship excursions, particularly to Holland, that endeavoured to repair some of the tragic relationship ruptures that had occurred between European countries as a result of the terrible Second World War. Clemens had a beautiful singing voice, and this interest, manifested as choir participation, continued until the last year of his life.

In 1987 Clemens, with his wife and children, moved to New Zealand. He applied to Mr Bill Gillespie, Chief of Orthopaedics at Christchurch, to have a supervised position that would allow him to register in New Zealand. When informed that he would have to do 2 years of acute hospital trauma, he declined, and chose instead to go to the remote Chatham Islands, 900km offshore from Christchurch. His time there not only allowed him to register in New Zealand, but he made long-term friends of the people on the Islands. Long after he was an established specialist in Christchurch, many would

MD Berlin 1966; Orthopaedic Specialist Tuebign 1976; Dip MSM (Otago) 2001; Fellow Australasian Faculty Musculoskeletal Medicine 2004
make the long journey to visit him, bringing intriguing gifts from these isolated Islands.

In 1988, he was offered a sponsored position at the Musculoskeletal Pain Assessment and Management Centre at Burwood Hospital, Christchurch, working under rheumatologist Dr Barrie Tait. In 1989, Dr Tait began the Diploma of Musculoskeletal Medicine through the auspices of the University of Otago. The Diploma aimed to educate general practitioners, rheumatologists and orthopaedic trainees in the area of musculoskeletal and manual medicine, and to fill a significant gap in medical education. Clemens was one of the founding trainees.

Dr John Robinson was a young GP when he first met Clemens at Burwood. Clemens inspired John to become interested, and then train in musculoskeletal medicine. John learned Clemens’ approach to patients, and was taught many manual therapy techniques by Clemens. Clemens was a very dedicated and skilled teacher, and John describes him as “always very supportive and patient, and taught me a great deal”. Several years later, in the late 1990s, Clemens agreed spend an afternoon a week teaching then GP Dr Elizabeth Eliot, and she too appreciated being able to learn a great deal from his sensitive hands and kindness of heart in both diagnosis and treatment.

When the focus of the Burwood Pain Management Clinic changed, Clemens elected to go into fulltime private practice in Papanui, Christchurch.

Clemens always loved teaching, and he and Elizabeth hosted evening musculoskeletal seminars for Christchurch GPs. For many years Clemens also regularly contributed articles on musculoskeletal medicine to the New Zealand Doctor magazine. Clemens worked in his practice until August 2014, when he developed cerebrovascular symptoms which stopped him from working. Despite that, he remained interested in supportive of musculoskeletal practice while he was well enough.

Clemens was an active member of the New Zealand Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine. For about 15 years, he was the association's treasurer, and he was instrumental in bringing many internationally recognised musculoskeletal specialists to teach seminars in New Zealand, such as Drs Jiri Dvorak, Karel Lewit and Pavel Kolar. Clemens persistently advocated the use of manual therapy techniques, and in his own practice demonstrated their therapeutic and financial effectiveness. Sometimes this emphasis caused controversy, but none could doubt his therapeutic success.

Barrie Tait found Clemens a good colleague, and appreciated his analytical approach to difficult cases and his wide experience in manual medicine. About 5 or 6 years ago, Clemens sent his good friend Barrie a birthday card, expressing the hope that they would both still be working when they were 140! Sadly, health issues cut short that dream.

Dr Clemens Franzmayr was an extremely capable and dedicated doctor, a delightful colleague and a colourful personality who will long be remembered by his colleagues and friends. Clemens is survived by his five children, Yasmin, Jazinta, Florian, Mira, Benjamin and Miko, to whom we offer our condolences.

Author information:
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