



The Australian Pain Society

2013
*Distinguished
Member
Award*

Awarded for services to the promotion,
treatment and science of pain management
and lifelong contribution to the
Australian Pain Society.

Following completion of the HSC in 1973, Amal began as a ledger keeper in the Bank of NSW. Realising that numbers and accounts were no match for personal interactions she took up a training position at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1976. On completing this course she obtained a registered nurse position in Gynaecology and Oncology at the nearby King George Hospital for Mothers and Babies. Amal secured a RN position within the Pain Management Centre at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1982, and since then, has maintained this association to the present day.

Working in close association with Dr John Ditton, Amal applied her considerable management skills to help develop the centre into a busy interdisciplinary unit providing the full array of pain management techniques. She instigated the establishment of the Acute Pain Service within the Department of Anaesthesia, and promoted its integration into the hospital's clinical care pathways. Her evolving roles also included patient education and support, assistance with interventional pain management techniques and nurse education. With an increasing emphasis on care co-ordination, recognition followed including becoming



Amal Helou

RN NP MScMed FFACNP

Australia's first Clinical Nurse Consultant in pain management in 1986 and Clinical co-ordinator in 1992.

Amal thrived in the developing field of pain management. She continued to develop her knowledge and skill base and received scholarships to attend the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) World Congress in 1987 and again in 1990. Amal

organised and chaired the first Nursing Seminar (refresher course) for the IASP at its 7th World Congress in France during 1993 and continued to provide leadership in the IASP meetings thereafter. This included convening a two day satellite symposium on nursing issues at the IASP World Congress in Sydney in 2005. Amal's willingness to provide leadership through strong advocacy and a diligent work ethic has become one of her trademarks.

With her dedication to personal development, Amal completed supplementary education including a Theological Certificate (1985) and a Graduate Diploma in Social Communications (1989). Whilst these broadened her skill set, it was the rapidly growing science supporting clinical practice in pain that continued to excite her. Amal was one of the first to graduate with the Master of Science in Medicine, Pain

Management, from the University of Sydney. During the course she forged more strong personal and professional ties. She has continued to encourage and support clinicians from all disciplines in expanding their knowledge and understanding of pain through her advocacy of this program and as an honorary lecturer in the Faculties of Nursing at Sydney University and the University of Western Sydney.

Amal has been a strong and determined advocate for the role of nurses within pain management teams. She instigated the Pain Interest Group - Nursing issues in NSW, which has subsequently expanded to be a national group affiliated with the Australian Pain Society. She was elected to the Society's executive in 1997, as a NSW representative, and helped develop the Society's newsletter through her editorship from 1999 through to 2004. Amal served as Vice President (2003-5) and then President of the Society (2005-9), continuing to cajole, support and direct colleagues with quiet assurance. Her time on the executive saw strengthening of the Australian Pain Society's multidisciplinary focus and support for pain management in the older person, a field she complements with her lecturing roles.

In recent years, Amal's leadership has extended into the clinical and political implications of the Nurse Practitioner role. Whilst implementing her advanced skill set at a local level, she has forged a path for fellow nurses in pain management to follow, and helped establish legitimacy for the advanced nurse practitioner.

At both State and Federal levels, Amal has been involved with the development of the nurse practitioner curriculum. This has involved assessment and legal processes, and promoting the field of pain management as an ideal area of need for the advanced clinician. Amal currently holds the positions of Secretary and Chair, Scientific Program Committee with the Australian College of Nurse Practitioners.

All Amal's endeavours have been predicated on improving patient access and quality of care, as demonstrated by her involvement with the Australian Pain Society's *Waiting in Pain Project*.

Whilst this Distinguished Member award recognises Amal's outstanding achievements and leadership in Pain Management, it also reflects her respectful and considered manner. Her contributions over many years to the Australian Pain Society have been marked by grace, humour and humility. She is a worthy recipient of the 2013 Australian Pain Society Distinguished Member Award.

