

Robin McKenzie,

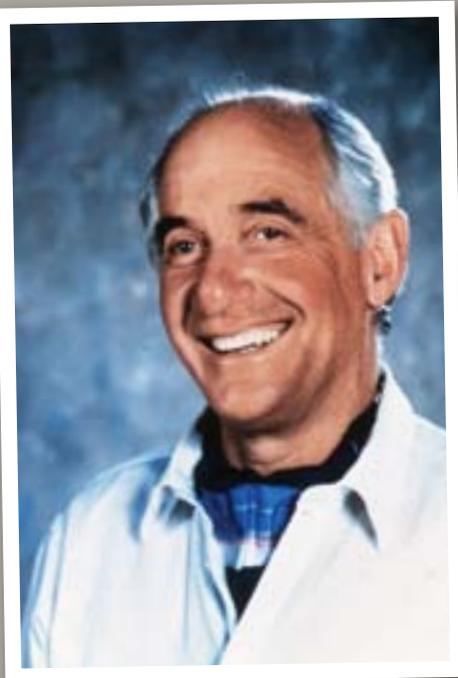
CNZM, OBE, FCSP (Hon), FNZSP (Hon), Dip MDT, Dip MT

With great sadness and shock we learnt Robin McKenzie had passed away on 13 May 2013. In typical Robin style he had kept his illness quiet to avoid any fuss and attention, wanting to spend the precious remaining time with his family, above all else the dearest thing to him.

Although Robin received many accolades and awards internationally and locally, he was just a humble New Zealander who had vision, tenacity, courage, and an amazing depth of compassion which led him always to want to help more and more people, in whatever way he could.

Robin was a man of great vision and pioneering spirit. At the age of only 23 he opened his clinic on The Terrace in Wellington. A chance discovery in 1956 led Robin to believe that there could be a better way of treating low back pain, and a sign of his tenacity and curiosity is that over the next few years and decades he worked hard at developing the system we all now know as the McKenzie Method of Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy (MDT). In the 1970s he wrote the first of the *Treat Your Own Back and Neck* books, and in typical Robin fashion, when it wasn't accepted by any publishers he worked out a way he could publish it himself. Not because he was seeking any fame or fortune, but because he knew it was a tool to help so many more patients than he could ever see by himself.

After many years of presenting his work at conferences and meetings throughout the world, in 1982 Robin formed the McKenzie Institute International. The aim of the Institute has always been to help educate more clinicians to help more patients, and to



support research for developing even more effective treatment. The first country to accept his work was the USA, and in 1986 there were enough clinicians interested in New Zealand to form a local branch. Now there are branches in 28 countries. Faculty members from Denmark, France, Italy, America, Canada, Australia, Argentina, and Japan all flew to New Zealand and attended Robin's funeral in Wellington on 20 May, with strong contingent of New Zealand physiotherapists.

The New Zealand physiotherapy profession has also benefited from Robin's vision and pioneering spirit. Robin was instrumental in setting up the NZ Private Practitioners Association in 1962 and the NZ Manipulative Physiotherapists Association in 1968 along with other like-minded clinicians such as Craig Cameron and Brian Mulligan. The purpose of both these groups was to support other physiotherapists, which Robin continued to do throughout his whole life, including in recent years setting up scholarships in New Zealand for new graduate physiotherapists to

learn MDT. He always had a passion for empowering young physiotherapists to fulfil their potential, and for challenging experienced physiotherapists to improve their clinical practice.

In the early 1990's the McKenzie Institute International opened four clinics in Wellington, and Robin employed young physiotherapists to carry on his work of treating patients. I was fortunate enough to be one of those young staff members and I will always be grateful to Robin for believing in us and trusting us with his work. He was always on hand to support and assist us and was an amazing mentor even though he was heavily involved with the growing International Institute. Although he ensured there was a high professional standard within the clinical setting, there was also a sense of fun and friendship. The International Diploma for MDT was initially taught through these clinics and the Faculty members who attended that initial programme remain friends to this day because of the relationships we built through Robin.

On 13 May 2013 a mighty totara fell. Robin McKenzie was an incredible man who worked hard to follow his vision, and who found a balance between being a mentor and clinician and being a family man with interests outside of the physiotherapy world. He always wanted to empower others to reach their potential and to put patients first. And he never stopped having a big vision. Only three years ago he discussed with me the fact that there are six billion people in the world and if 80% of them have back pain then there are approximately four billion people we still have to help. To honour his legacy we'll continue to endeavour to do just that.

*Celia Monk MPNZ
Faculty Member McKenzie Institute
International*