

## René Bester, Occupational Therapist

René Bester is a State Registered Occupational Therapist with a wide range of experience both in the UK and South Africa. She qualified as an Occupational Therapist in 1997 after completing a four-year degree course at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa. She is a member of the British Association of Occupational Therapists.

Between 1998 and 2001 she joined a private practice (Crouse & Associates) in Cape Town, South Africa. Initially she worked in private hospitals, gaining experience in providing therapy to clients with conditions such as traumatic brain injury, stroke, coma, spinal injury and amputations. She also contributed to the setting up of a private rehabilitation unit where clients with traumatic brain injury were treated. René Bester also completed a three-week course learning and applying Bobarth principles in therapy with stroke victims.

During this time, René Bester became involved with clients supported by the South African Workmen's Compensation Scheme. In this role she provided a wide range of services that included vocational assessments, design and implementation of

vocational rehabilitation and return to work programmes and the recommendation and implementation of adaptations to the work environment. She also provided assessment and recommendation reports to the insurance companies involved in the claims from the Workmen's Compensation Fund. Her experience includes conditions such as traumatic brain injury, spinal injuries, whiplash injuries, complicated fractures i.e. compound fractures, joint injuries, heart conditions, amputations, back conditions, depression and chronic pain syndrome.

While working with Crouse & Associates, René Bester specialised as an expert witness, writing medico legal reports on behalf of claimants and defendants. She delivered assessments and recommendations relating to loss of income as well as care needs on conditions such as traumatic brain injury, whiplash injuries, fractures, multiple injuries, joint injuries, amputations, spinal injuries and hearing impairment.

In 2001, René Bester decided to further her career in the UK. She worked as a locum in several acute as well as rehabilitation settings.

In the early part of 2001 she joined the Occupational Therapy Department at Frimley Park Hospital where she provided therapy to people that suffered from stroke and other neurological conditions, orthopaedic conditions such as fractured hips, cardiac conditions, dementia and amputees.

Up to April 2002 she worked in the Farnham Community Hospital's Stroke Unit where stroke victims received rehabilitation via a fast track or slow stream approach depending on the extent of their stroke. René Bester provided cognitive therapy, rehabilitation using the Bobarth Approach as well as pre-discharge home visits, family support and liaised with the multi-disciplinary team.

From May 2002 until January 2005, René Bester was contracted to St. Peter's & Ashford NHS Trust where she gained extensive experience in several different areas. These included, respiratory diseases, gastro - intestinal conditions, amputees, cardiac illnesses, dementia and orthopaedic conditions. She was also responsible for the development of the Occupational Therapy service in the newly found Stroke Unit, implementing treatment programmes, evidence-based outcome measures and protocols, developing an OT rationale for strokes and supervising junior therapists.

From January 2005 until September 2006 René Bester was involved in the exciting amalgamation of the Social Services Department and the Intermediate Care Service of the Bracknell Forest Borough Council. She worked both within the community and a rehabilitation unit providing a step down facility for clients that have been discharged from hospital as well as preventing admission to the acute setting. She gained extensive experience in identifying needs for equipment and adaptation within the home environment, identifying needs relating to care requirements and subsequently requesting and implementing home care packages.

In 2006, René Bester joined Bush and Company Rehabilitation, where she has combined her experience as a medico legal expert in South Africa with her skills obtained in the UK to provide a comprehensive service in the medico legal field. René Bester has experience with Claimant and Defendant cases and has acted as a Single Joint Expert. Presently René Bester still continues her association with Bush and Company Rehabilitation.



From January 2009 until March 2010 René Bester worked as a part time associate with Bennett Occupational Services. Her services were contracted to London Borough of Hillingdon and she gained further experience in identifying needs for equipment and adaptation in the home environment.



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