

# People Who Shaped SMA

# Kieran Richardson

## **What made you decide on a career in Sports Medicine?**

I was very interested in sports from a young age, heck – I used to go to bed at night reading Wisdin's cricketing almanac! I played and watched all sports growing up, and particularly enjoyed basketball, cricket, soccer and AFL.

I was an emerging fast bowler as a 13-year-old, and one day broke down on the pitch with severe back pain. Ultimately, I had bilateral pars interarticularis fractures and a spondylolisthesis. I was able to get a diagnosis and return to sports – even won the Year 9 Champion Boy a year later!

During high school I was especially interested in studying medicine, physical education teaching or physiotherapy, and eventually decided on physiotherapy as I could combine scientific therapies with my love for people and seeing change.

## **Were you an athlete prior to commencing your career? If so, what sports did you play?**

Depends how you define an athlete? Haha. I was the co-captain of my school basketball and AFL teams and would have played around 2-3 hours of sports most days of my schooling.

Moving into upper high school, I began to realise being a professional athlete was an unrealistic goal, so I continued through my late teens and 20's playing at a social level.

## **Can you describe your educational background?**

I have completed a Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapy), a Masters of Clinical Physiotherapy and a Post-Masters Fellowship at the Australian College of Physiotherapy, gaining specialisation in the musculoskeletal field.

I am currently assisting with research through Sydney University and may look to undertake a PhD at some point in my career, although my wife is doing hers, so happy to wait!

## **How and when did you start working in Sports Medicine?**

In my final year of studying Physiotherapy I worked as a Sports Trainer at a local Australian Rules Football.

After graduating as a physiotherapist I worked in a hospital setting, where I spent time on an orthopaedic ward and in the outpatient department, seeing many patients with serious sporting injuries, and was a part of their rehabilitation.





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Moving into private practice after a few years, I would see sports-related injuries every week. After years working privately, I developed a special interest in ACL injuries after managing two very distinctively contrasting cases almost simultaneously during my musculoskeletal specialisation training. The first was a female patient in her mid-30s who presented to me on a four-wheeled walker, in distress and in agony, approximately four years after her original ACL tear, having undergone five surgeries at that point.

A patient of similar demographics requested my opinion four days after a non-contact mechanism playing sports, without having yet undertaken high-powered imaging. She was adamant that no matter



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what the scan showed, she was opting for non-surgical management due to friends having poor outcomes from knee surgery—an MRI later confirmed a full thickness ACL tear. We outlined a plan for management, she vigilantly completed her prescribed home exercise program and returned to field hockey in four months—and has remained symptom-free.

### **How and when did you first join SMA? What was your initial role?**

I joined in 2003 as a student member.

### **How did being part of SMA help your career?**

It has helped to consistently provide me with up-to-date information as my career has progressed, as well as stay connected to like-minded and world-leading experts in sports medicine and health around the world.

### **What has been your contribution to SMA?**

I was fortunate to speak at the national Sports Medicine Australia conference in 2018 on the topic of 'ACL tear: Non-surgical Management.'

It was apparently the most attended and popular workshop at the conference, provided a stimulating questions and answers time afterward and helped to galvanise common points of agreement across multiple sports medicine disciplines.

### **What has been your career highlight?**

I was fortunate in 2019 to be interviewed as a part of a Fox Sports Australia exclusive on the topic of non-operative management of ACL tears. This was aired nationally and internationally and has helped to convert both many

clinicians and patients towards non-surgical treatment solutions.

### **Do you have any career regrets?**

I wish I had sought out more regular formal mentoring earlier on in my career. I had limited access to this early in my hospital and private practice employment, but what I did receive was incredible.

Going through my specialist training, I had both research and clinical experts sharpen my thinking on a consistent basis; this was vital in helping to develop my clinical reasoning and communication.

I now have a consultancy company where formal mentoring is a key component of what my consultants offer clinicians locally in Perth, nationally and internationally.



### **What do you believe is your most important contribution to your industry?**

I would say communicating the benefits of the Australian Physiotherapy Association's Specialisation Pathway, as well the genuine benefits physiotherapy can offer within the profession, inter-professionally and to the general public.

### **What is your advice to those starting out in their sports medicine career?**

My advice would be to seek out clinical mentors who you respect, are gracious and are committed to your personal growth, set up consistent time where you can interact with them and have an e-journal where you document your reflections after.

Really there are no silly questions, so don't be afraid to ask a lot of them and challenge the status quo.