

Newsletter

October 2020

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International Organization of Physical Therapists in Pelvic and Women's Health



Committee Reports

President: Melissa Davidson

President Report

It has been a rough year so far for most physiotherapists around the world. The loss of loved ones, friends, colleagues, and the stresses of coping with Covid-19 has affected everyone on both a personal and business levels. Our thoughts are with you all and we hope that 2021 will be a better year for all.

With many countries locked down, international travel is off the cards for most. This has affected WP Congress in Dubai in 2021, with it being changed from a 'live in person' congress to an online format for all areas. As part of the original congress we had been planning social events, networking opportunities, a pre-congress course, symposiums during the congress, and of course a dedicated stream for pelvic and women's health. This has had to change due to Covid-19, but rest assured we are working behind the scenes to enable as much content to be presented online as possible – nothing is set in stone yet but keep an eye out on WP updates in your email boxes.

We are in the process of reviewing the IOPTPWH constitution and hope to have the first draft out to members for review by the start of next year. It is a long document that we are trying to streamline it as much as possible, as well as bring it up to date with modern technology such as using emails to send members updates 😊! We are also looking at social media as a way of communicating with members, so keep a look out for information on this coming soon.

Be kind and stay safe

Melissa Davidson
President IOPTPWH

Vice President: Sonia Roa

Vice President Report

We have certainly had difficult months for everyone on the planet. Times that have accelerated change in different aspects of our lives like never before: as physiotherapists, we had to rethink the modality of care for our patients, the modality of study (both undergraduate and graduate), and all this: from one moment to another. Most of our patients have had to stay at home, monitoring their health remotely, as long as they have internet access. Health care has been especially challenging since in many cases, differences in access are accentuated, and people live inside homes with a high level of stress. For the World Health Organization, a topic that is of special interest within the home is that of violence against women. According to what has been reported it has increased in moments of confinement, considering that a large proportion of women live with their attacker. As Physiotherapists in the pelvic and women's health specialty, we have great closeness with our patients and can be detecting agents of gender violence. We have an important role in guiding and helping our patients and their children if the case arises. My invitation today is to be prepared, informing us about the WHO recommendations at https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/violence/vaw_series/en/ and the indications of the respective authority in each country. Let us be protagonists of the aid against violence against women.

Sonia Roa

Secretary: Heather Pierce

Secretary Report

What a challenging year we have all been experiencing! I sincerely hope as you read this report you, your families and colleagues are safe and well.

‘World Confederation of Physical Therapy’ now ‘World Physiotherapy’ World Physiotherapy, the global body for national physiotherapy associations, has launched a new brand and website <https://world.physio/> IOPTPWH membership list can be found when you check out the new website <https://world.physio/subgroups/pelvic-womens-health> Delegates! Please check out the page and let me know of any corrections, additions or updates. You may notice that there is less detailed information on our IOPTPWH subgroup on this new platform. Thanks to Sonia and Melissa who are in the process of setting up our own ‘FB’ page for delegates to communicate, access resources and the latest information on the group.

Executive committee meetings

The executive committee has held five 'Zoom' meetings so far in 2020: January, March, April, June, and September. Our final meeting is scheduled for November.

Membership

Since the start of 2020 we have received several enquiries for membership from: Iran, Argentina, Togo, Jamaica, and Egypt. Formal membership applications have been received from Austria and Latvia. It has been wonderful to be contacted by physiotherapists from our global community, and to learn about practice in women's and pelvic health in these countries.

Our Organization's membership comprises recognized pelvic and women's health sub-sections or groups of the parent national physical therapy/physiotherapy organizations which are World Physiotherapy (previously WCPT) member organizations in good standing.

Unfortunately, if those who enquire have a pelvic and women's health group but are not in a World Physiotherapy member country, they cannot join IOPTPWH. The same applies for pelvic and women's health groups within World Physiotherapy member countries if the parent national organization does not recognize the group.

There have been several enquiries from individuals regarding membership, however only the groups (not individuals) described can join. If individuals are members of one of our member sub-groups they are, by default, IOPTPWH members. As previously mentioned, current member groups are listed on the website <https://world.physio/subgroups/pelvic-womens-health/members> Those who are unable to become members of IOPTPWH are encouraged to be 'friends', so we can continue to support our colleagues by communications through the biannual newsletter and World Physiotherapy updates. World Physiotherapy Congress 2021 – Now Online <https://world.physio/congress>

We have been successful in our submissions for the upcoming congress for the following sessions:

- Precongress Workshop 'Physiotherapy in the maternity setting'
- Focused Symposia 'Role of physiotherapy in prevention and management of uro-gynecological cancer'
- Networking session: an informal opportunity to meet and talk with colleagues who share common interests.

With the Congress moving to an online format, we are currently in communications with the organizing committee to see whether (or not) and how these events will be held. Further updates will be provided as they come to hand. Regardless, I hope to see you all 'online' for the World Physiotherapy Congress April 2021!

Heather Pierce

Treasurer: Meena Sran

Treasurer's Report

As of September 14, 2020 we have 14,077.47 GBP in the account.

Thank you to all those member countries who have paid their 2020 membership dues. We appreciate this has been an extraordinary year and some may have missed the email with payment information for 2020. Another reminder will be sent soon. If you can please arrange payment promptly we would appreciate it.

Meena Sran

Member at Large: Annelie Gutke

Report from the appointed project group responsible

During this strange year of 2020, I have had, as many of us have had, a different everyday life. In my position as a senior lecturer in the physiotherapist program, I have been 'shock digitized'. I have hardly met any students and talk in front of the computer screen all day long. Of course I have learned very useful pedagogical methods for the future but the lack of meeting students is great! At my clinical, I meet patients with all safety measures taken, visors, distancing and a lot of hand washing. The situation with COVID has fortunately not prevented us from starting an Appointed Project Group of Education within pelvic and women's health. The main purpose of the appointed project group is to determine what IOPTPWH can do to promote education within physiotherapy in the field of women's and pelvic health worldwide. During spring, the Executive Committee of IOPTPWH called for interest in participating in the working group. We were pleased to receive interest from ten colleagues representing six different countries and three continents. We were impressed by the high level of competence, knowledge and expertise that these colleagues constituted. However, in order to have a reasonably large group for discussions, it was decided that each country can only have one representative at the meetings.

We had our first digital meeting on the 31st of August, where we had presentation of the participants. Furthermore, we had a brain storm around the goal that could be set for the appointed project group that would work globally. We will continue to work out HOW the appointed project group can support physiotherapists globally to find and to implement adequate education in the field of pelvic and women's health physiotherapy.

Wouldn't it be great if all physiotherapists had basic knowledge of pelvic and women's health?

Annelie Gutke

Message from the Newsletter Editor: Shirley Bustard

Thank you to those countries who have submitted articles to this newsletter, especially during these unprecedented times. I do hope that you and your families are safe and well. To help share the task of producing the newsletter, I will ask a different region every six months to produce articles. There is a template to assist with this and I am very happy to give advice. Please also share any news, resources, articles or links of interest. We will rotate through the following 7 groups and I look forward to receiving your submissions.

The WCPT Regions (and IOPTPWH group members) are

1. Asia/Western Pacific- Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore.
2. Africa-Nigeria, South Africa
3. Europe (1*) – Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Ireland
4. Europe (2*) – Greece, Israel, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal.
5. Europe (3*) – Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom
6. North America/Caribbean – Bermuda, Canada, United States of America
7. South America – Brazil and Chile

Shirley Bustard
IOPTPWH Newsletter Editor

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Members Reports Japan

Japanese Society of Physical Therapy Section on Women's and Men's Health

<http://jspt.japanpt.or.jp/jsptwmh/>

Our organization was established in 2016, and it is now four and a half years running. Within these four years, the number of members has grown and our organisation is receiving increased attention. There are now 5977 members who have completed the program for new physical therapists provided by the Japanese Physiotherapy Association.

We have not held our own academic conference yet, but we have co-hosted it with the Japanese Society of Musculoskeletal Physical Therapy since we have established. However, we are now planning it on our own in 2022 which is so exciting! We have also run one-day or half-day workshops every year. In 2018, we had the first research-support-seminar regarding men's health physiotherapy (Photo 1) by inviting two international professionals from Ireland and Australia. We are now planning the second seminar in 2022.

Our Aims

Our biggest goal now is to incorporate our section in the next few years. To make our goal come true, we are now running four main projects; three-years multicentre clinical trial (started just in 2020), our first independent conference in 2022, translation and introduction of international guideline, and continuing educational courses for pelvic floor and pre-and-postnatal physical therapy.

Current challenges

Medical costs for women's and men's health physiotherapy are neither covered by public nor private insurance, although they covers many of other fields of physiotherapy. This is

Challenges for membership in your country mainly because physiotherapy in women's and men's health are newly recognized field in Japan, and we have not been able to build the consolidated evidence based on women and men in Japan. The second reason is that we have neither had a consolidated curriculum for undergraduate nor postgraduate yet. These situations have made women and men with pelvic floor dysfunctions find it difficult to locate suitably trained practitioners, and even when they can do so, they still have to pay for it at their own expenses.

As the strategies to deal with these, we have been running the above four main projects (multicentre clinical trial, independent congress, guideline, and educational courses). We also think that the role of pelvic health physiotherapy for men and women needs considerable promotion and international educational collaboration. Through the collaboration, we believe that it could enhance patient care in pelvic health physiotherapy in the near future.

Plans for the future

International collaboration in pelvic health physiotherapy is optimal and necessary to improve the quality of care and quality of life for patients who suffer from pelvic health related conditions. We believe Japan would be able to demonstrate improvement in standards of care and level of pelvic health academic education as a result of the international collaboration effort.

Akiko Mori

President of JSPTWMH

Photo 1: research-support seminar in 2018.



New Zealand



Pelvic, Women's and Men's Health special interest group of Physiotherapy New Zealand

www.physiotherapy.org.nz

Our members are physiotherapists who have an interest in the area of Pelvic, Women's and/or Men's health. They are members of Physiotherapy New Zealand and have chosen to pay a membership fee to belong to our special interest group of 192 members. We have been running for 20+ years, thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of volunteer committee members. Our vision is to strive to provide leadership development opportunities, support our members in their career development, and to provide quality education to our members. 2020 has challenged all us around the world – with COVID-19 changing the way we run education opportunities, communicate and connect with fellow colleagues. The New Zealand government made a strong commitment to eradicate COVID-19, which meant periods of lockdown and levels of restrictions over the last five months. Physiotherapists were often unable to work or work in limited capacity. As a group we cancelled two face-to-face courses this year and embraced online learning. Using Zoom, we had guest speakers from Australia and the USA and ran five courses with up to 100 members enrolling in each course. Focus areas were men's health, sexual function after prostate cancer, the paediatric bladder, neurological patients and bladder function. The feedback was very positive and appreciated by our members.

Several of our members have been trained in managing vaginal pessaries for prolapse and are offering this service in the public and private settings. One member was on an International panel for an E-delphi study looking at Developing a Competency Standard for Physiotherapy Training in Pessary Management. Another member has completed her PhD – one aspect her research looked at was change in levator ani muscle stiffness and active force during pregnancy and post-partum. Other members have designed and manufactured pelvic support belts which are available online.

We have a newsletter that is emailed to our members three times/year. This newsletter is only available to members via logging in as a member on the Physiotherapy New Zealand website.

The New Zealand Ministry of Health (supported by the Accident Compensation Corporation) is leading a surgical mesh work programme which aims to support those who have been harmed by surgical mesh and minimize the risk to patients who may be considering its use. Several work streams have been developed. One of our members is the physiotherapy representative on the Surgical Mesh Education and Harm Prevention work stream. Due to Covid-19

there has been little work to date however work is planned in the very near future. We expect physiotherapy involvement in other work streams also as this very important programme progresses.

Like every country, our challenges are meeting the education and national representative needs of our members and coming up with creative ways to do this – supporting those living in the cities and those in remote areas. New Zealand is an island nation, one of the southernmost countries in the world (apart from Antarctica!). You can feel isolated and attending international events is costly and time consuming! Thank goodness for the internet and online courses.

In April 2021 we aim to hold our biannual conference. This is a 2-day event, with guest speakers from around the country such as urologists, gynaecologists, dieticians, sexual health specialists, dermatologists and physiotherapists. It is a very sociable event – with approximately 50% of our members attending. A great mixture of experienced and new-graduate physiotherapists, rural and urban, private and hospital based – all learning together and having fun and bridging the isolation of working in different regions of Aotearoa.

Sharon Wilson,
Chairperson

Australia



The APA's Women's, Men's and Pelvic Health Physiotherapy group is the fourth largest special interest group in our association with over 1400 members. We have seven State Chapters with committees of varying size. The State Chairs make up the National Committee and includes:

Tarryn Lawrence – Queensland
 Laura Worthing – New South Wales
 Ella Cameron – Australian Capital Territory (also an Australian IOPTPWH delegate)
 Vanessa Wilmot – Victoria
 Rachel Andrew – Tasmania
 Sarah Walsh – South Australia
 Irena Nurkic – Western Australia

Our National Committee meets several times a year via videoconference to discuss upcoming professional development lectures and courses, advocacy items for our varying clinical areas, and ways to support our membership. We usually meet once a year for a full-day face-to-face meeting however COVID-

19 has interfered with that in 2020. I took over the role of National Chair two years ago, following on from Alexandra Lopes. Alex led our committee through two huge processes – a group name change and the initial development of our Career Pathway.

Group Name Change

Our special interest group was previously called “Continence and Women’s Health” which wasn’t inclusive of various population groups that we often treat including men, children and intersex individuals. A thorough process followed including consultation of our membership via our State Chapters and debate at a National Committee level. After reviewing suggestions of how best to capture the populations and clinical presentations that we manage, a vote was held and “Women’s, Men’s and Pelvic Health” was chosen. We believe this best represents the areas that we work in including bladder and bowel dysfunction, pelvic pain, DRAM, lactating breast, female and male specific cancers, bone health, pregnancy and post-natal care, and children’s pelvic health. This new name also helped to shape our new career pathway.

APA Career Pathway

Approximately four years ago the APA began work to restructure and rewrite its professional development framework for Women’s, Men’s and Pelvic Health. Some of our most experienced clinicians and academics contributed to developing a framework and writing learning outcomes. After thorough review processes and consultation, we have commenced work on a career pathway based on the CANMEDs model, with three “streams”: Women’s Health, Pelvic Health, and Men’s Health. A significant amount of the theory content will be offered as online modules, and practical assessment skills and treatment techniques taught face-to-face. The tender for some of this work was awarded to Taryn Hallam, well known for her own Women’s Health Training Associates business. Taryn’s first online module – Introductory Women’s Health Physiotherapy Level 1 – is now available online at the APA website:

<https://enrol.apacpdguide.com.au/courses/introductory-womens-health-physiotherapy-level-1>

We are looking forward to more high quality online education, and face-to-face courses once it is appropriate. Our vision is for a career pathway that takes newly graduated physiotherapists from novice through to highly developed or expert level, with the flexibility to obtain training in other clinical areas to enhance their skill as a WMPH clinician.

Changes to the Profession with COVID-19

With the reporting of the first positive COVID-19 cases in Australia in early 2020, the health care sector was quick to make changes to prevent unnecessary transmission. Compared to many other nations, our government’s aim has been local elimination. Social distancing and restrictions have been tough, and have impacted on education and many businesses. Hospitals and health care clinics (including physiotherapy practices) have been responsive to government directions to prioritise only the most urgent cases when it comes to face-to-face contact, however this has varied from state-to-state depending on the number of active COVID-19 cases and the extent of community transmission. Due to this,

we have increasingly utilised Telehealth with support from both Medicare (our government-subsidised healthcare system) and private health insurance companies. This has enabled us to continue to provide physiotherapy care effectively in most cases. Many Australian physiotherapists reviewed their acute care skills in preparation for predicted high numbers of patients with cardiorespiratory needs. Some of us even volunteered to work in virus screening clinics to help alleviate the increased workload of nursing staff (photo 1). We look forward to being able to provide a very high standard of physiotherapy care to our clients as restrictions continue to be lifted.



Photo 1: Catherine Willis working in a Coronavirus screening clinic at QEII Jubilee Hospital in Brisbane, Australia.

Notable Professional Development

Besides our career pathway, we have also provided professional education in a number of other ways. In October 2019 the APA's Transform Conference was held in Adelaide. Our two international keynote speakers were Dr Chantal Dumoulin from Canada and Dr Jennifer Kruger from New Zealand (photo 2).

We have also adapted to social distancing by increasing our number of online live lectures, including two very recently with Carina Siracusa from the USA. Carina was supposed to have been visiting us in person earlier in the year, but was very happy to provide six hours of introductory education for us on the topics of neurological conditions and paediatric continence.

Future Directions

It has long been recognised that for many women pelvic floor dysfunction stems from birth trauma and other physical consequences of pregnancy. In 2020 we have been collaborating to advocate strongly for better access to ante natal and post-natal physiotherapy care for birthing women in Australia by

lobbying Federal politicians. This would include increased funding for public sector jobs for physiotherapists trained in the area of women's and pelvic health – the APA's new career pathway will help to provide the education for clinicians wishing to work in this rewarding field. We look forward to the value in women's health being recognised and supported, as better health outcomes for women are valuable for the child, the family, the community and the economy. And most importantly – the woman herself.



Photo 2: Tory Toogood, Catherine Willis, Dr Jennifer Kruger, Dr Chantal Dumoulin

Catherine Willis, APAM
National Chair Australian Physiotherapy Association Women's, Men's and Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Group