



International Organization of Physical Therapists in Women's Health



It is now over a year since the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Women's Health (IOPTWH) met in Vancouver, and the executive and subcommittees are currently working on actions that were agreed in Canada.

Female genital mutilation

At the end of May 2008, Ruth Broom, IOPTWH chief delegate for New Zealand and chair of the practice committee, attended a meeting with the World Health Organization (WHO) Department of Reproductive Health and Research in Geneva, Switzerland. This was arranged via Dr Paul Van Look, director of the above department, to complete the process of the IOPTWH taking a position against female genital mutilation (FGM). The process included writing a position paper (available at: www.ioptwh.org), and gaining the support of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), which it did last year. The objective of Ruth's meeting was to hand over the documentation to the WHO through the appropriate department.

She met in round-table discussion with three of Dr Van Look's staff – Dr Heli Bathija (Finland), who chaired the session, Dr Elise Johansen (Norway), and Jane Cottingham Giradin (UK) – handing over copies of the IOPTWH position paper as well as a copy of the WCPT position statement. The group noted the unanimous support of the 101 WCPT member organizations, who all oppose the practice. Ruth could point out that, as women's health therapists, our scope of practice covers many of the long-term effects of FGM, and discussed her own experience as a clinician with migrant communities in New Zealand, where African immigrants are largely from the Horn of Africa. The chair of the meeting discussed further involvement from IOPTWH; for example, with WHO education efforts. Ruth was also given a copy of both the WHO statement on FGM to the World Health Assembly (adopted by 193 member states on 23 May 2008) and the WHO interagency statement publication, *Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation*.

Conference 2009

Next year, IOPTWH will host its biennial conference in Oerias, Portugal, on 9–10 October 2009. The location is by the River Tagus, just 20 km from Lisbon. The exact programme has yet to be decided, but it is likely to focus on 'the core' in relation to different aspects of women's health physiotherapy, and include a mixture of presentations and workshops. Previous IOPTWH events in Barcelona, Ljubljana and Vancouver have attracted delegates from over 20 countries who have enjoyed not only the educational events, but also the opportunity to network with peers. Portuguese IOPTWH chief delegate Maria Fátima Sancho, who is leading the organizing group, believes that the location, with its easy access to the sea and other resorts, good transport links to Lisbon, and mild weather, should add to the appeal of next year's event. Full details will be available on the Organization's website (www.ioptwh.org) by the end of this year, or from secretary Gill Brook (gill.brook@lineone.net).

Newsletter and website

Simone Gruenig from Canada has completed her first year as newsletter editor and website coordinator. The newsletter layout is currently being updated by a graphic designer. Simone is always looking for members to contribute any of the following for the newsletter: book reviews; articles; highlights from courses and conferences; and interesting member profiles. There is no minimum length and contributions can be written in any format.

The website layout has been changed, and will be modernized and developed further over the forthcoming months. New LISTSERVs have been organized and will be available shortly.

I would encourage you all to support IOPTWH by contributing to the newsletter and visiting the websites. As with interactiveCSP in the UK, the LISTSERVs are an excellent forum for posing questions and sharing views on a range of women's health issues.

Gill Brook
IOPTWH secretary