

Conference report

POGP Annual Conference 2015

The Margie Polden Memorial Fund was established to honour the work and achievements of a much-loved and well-respected member of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Women's Health (now POGP). The award, which is made possible by the generosity of Margie's family, enables a student or newly qualified physiotherapist with a particular interest in the speciality to attend the POGP Annual Conference.

The most recent meeting was held at the Majestic Hotel, Harrogate, UK, on 25–26 September 2015, and I was the lucky and excited winner of the Margie Polden Bursary. My interest in pelvic, obstetric and gynaecological physiotherapy began even before I applied to university, and I was further inspired by a student placement at the Royal Free Hospital in London. However, frustrated by the lack of undergraduate teaching in the speciality, I was keen to gain further knowledge and experience, which led me to apply for the 2015 award. Now, as a newly qualified physiotherapist working at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in London, I am currently based at Hammersmith Hospital, where Margie worked for much of her career to initiate and develop physiotherapy in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Aside from my excitement and anticipation about experiencing my first physiotherapy conference as a graduate, I was slightly apprehensive about what to expect, especially because of my inexperience in the speciality. However, thankfully, I was welcomed by friendly, inspiring and enthusiastic members and exhibitors, all of whom were genuinely keen to share their passion and knowledge, and promote their area of expertise.

The 2-day conference covered a range of innovative and controversial subjects, which gave me an insight into the current issues affecting women's and men's health physiotherapy practice. The topics, which were often complex and sensitive, were delivered with enthusiasm by a variety of expert healthcare professionals, who sparked discussion, debate and the sharing of knowledge.

Conference was opened by Professor R. B. Smith, a consultant gynaecologist at St Mary's



Figure 1. Doreen McClurg, POGP chairman (left), presents Katy Megson, winner of the Margie Polden Memorial Bursary (right), with her award certificate at the 2015 Annual Conference.

Hospital, Manchester, who discussed the topical subject of the use of mesh in gynaecological surgery with humour. Despite previously having had little understanding of the intricacies of this area, I found his talk straightforward. It was interesting to discuss the effects of media coverage and the political responses to the problems associated with mesh use, and also the importance of empowering patients to make an informed personal decision about their care.

Another highlight for me was the lecture by Charlotte Burnell and Lucia Berry on the evolving area of physiotherapy services for vulval pain. It was fascinating to explore the role of physiotherapists within this complex area, and how our treatment coincides with other medical and psychological therapies. However, it was disappointing to discover that, on average, patients with vulval pain wait for over 7 years to find a

specialist physiotherapy service. There is a need for further development and promotion of this area to improve accessibility for patients.

As a newly qualified physiotherapist, the presentations on professional issues such as putting together a Health and Care Professions Council portfolio (see pp. 31–37), and advice on the use of social media were useful. These motivated me to be more proactive in reflecting on different sources of learning, and using social media to interact with other professionals in order to enhance my learning by utilizing professional networks and accessing up-to-date research.

The diversity of talks over the 2 days highlighted the varied career roles that are available within the speciality, which I found both exciting and inspiring. In particular, the extended roles of gaining prescribing rights, and running specialist clinics within a multidisciplinary team, made me aware of the range of skills used to develop individualized and holistic treatment plans with the overall aim of improving quality of life. The enthusiasm of the speakers and their motivation to deliver high-quality care illustrated how

satisfying and rewarding it is to work in this area. Networking with other professionals also provided me with a convenient way of gaining career advice from members with diverse roles and interests.

Overall, attending Conference was an invaluable experience that has consolidated my learning. Going forward, I hope to incorporate the skills that I have learned into a holistic treatment model that I can use while treating patients throughout my band 5 rotations. It has also inspired me to attend future courses, such as mindfulness and motivational interviewing, in order to enhance my communication skills when treating patients with more-complex presentations.

I am extremely grateful for having been given the opportunity to attend Conference, which has confirmed my desire to study the speciality further and continue my involvement with POGP.

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