

## Notes and news

### Dame Josephine Barnes Bursary

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

You may notice that what was the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Women's Health (IOPTWH) now has an extra "P" in its acronym. The association went through a consultation process with its member countries, and the new name was voted on and accepted at its business meeting at the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) Congress in Geneva, Switzerland, on 11 May 2019. This meeting is held every 4 years, and all IOPTPW member countries are invited to send nominated delegates to vote at it. The new name is the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Pelvic and Women's Health (IOPTPWH), which reflects the wider clinical areas, including men's health, that the association now represents internationally.

A subgroup of WCPT, IOPTPWH was formed in 1999, and POGP (then called the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Women's Health) was one of the founding members. Full information about the association can be found online ([www.wcpt.org/ioptwh](http://www.wcpt.org/ioptwh)). Katie Mann and I represent POGP as the chief and second delegates, respectively. The role of the delegates is to provide the link between the member country and IOPTPWH. This year, POGP voted on the name change, took part in a survey of scope of practice and submitted research to the newsletter. I was privileged to attend the business meeting in Geneva as the UK delegate.

Gill Brook has been involved with IOPTPWH since its foundation, first as secretary and then as president for the past 4 years. She presented a passionate address about the work of the association over this time, and outlined plans for the future. Gill also reflected on words from the late Jo Cox's maiden speech: "We are far more united than the things which divide us." She was Gill's local MP, which made this a poignant moment.

Five new countries, became members of IOPTPWH: Belgium, Greece, Japan, Singapore and Spain. Most had proudly sent delegates to accept their membership certificates in person.

With Gill standing down, the new IOPTPWH president is Melissa Davidson of New Zealand.

I was delighted to be there representing the UK as we voted on various initiatives. I was also happy to promote *JPOGP* and encourage international submissions at this meeting. Meeting representatives from so many countries and making connections was a great experience. We all brought biscuits to represent our countries, which got our taste buds going and started lots of conversations. The members of IOPTPWH are a very sociable and friendly group, and we all had a lot in common to discuss. Gill organized a social event for us on the last night of the WCPT Congress, which gave us another chance to meet up (Fig. 1).

A pre-Congress course organized by IOPTPWH entitled "Pelvic Health: Sport and Exercise" was held on 10 May. The international speakers were Professor Kari Bø (Norway), Professor Paul Hodges (Australia), Patricia Mota (Portugal), and Jacqueline De Jong and Helena Luginbühl (Switzerland). This was an extremely popular event that brought attendees right up to date with current evidence. It was especially fascinating to listen to the speakers discussing their own research with each other. The course also included the option to attend two out of four workshops, and a practical exercise group led by Kari Bø.

The 2019 WCPT Congress ran from 11 to 13 May. It was attended by 4500 physiotherapists from 131 countries. Over 3 days, 1864 presenters delivered a huge range of fantastic talks and discussions. Five hundred new posters were displayed twice a day. Physioswiss, the Swiss physiotherapy association, hosted Congress, and we received a very warm welcome from them. A huge variety of topics were covered, including aspects of clinical practice, leadership, education and research. You can find out more about WCPT online ([www.wcpt.org](http://www.wcpt.org)). In the 2 days before Congress started, WCPT held a series of business meetings where Gill Brook represented the association as IOPTPWH president. Thirteen new member organizations were admitted to WCPT, meaning that it now represents 121 countries worldwide.



Figure 1. Delegates at the business meeting.



Figure 2. Attendees at the networking session.

Congress included several fantastic programme items dedicated to women's and pelvic health, with researchers presenting new findings every 8 min during one session! These events proved to be very popular, and we hope that there may be even more on the programme next time. Gill also manned the IOPTPWH stand in the main exhibition hall: she has dedicated so many hours to all aspects of IOPTPWH, and represented the speciality so professionally and passionately! We were delighted that she received the WCPT International Service Award (see p. 74 below).

On 13 May, IOPTPWH held a networking session during which attendees moved between four tables to discuss four topics:

- (1) "Controversies About Mesh Surgery in Gynaecology: the Impact on Physiotherapists";
- (2) "The Broad Range of Women's Health Physiotherapy: Beyond the Pelvis";

- (3) "Pelvic Floor Education: How Do You Create Competent Clinicians?"; and
- (4) "Perinatal Physical Therapy Can Be Undervalued: How Do We Prevent This?".

I was happy to facilitate discussion of the first topic with Dr Gillian Campbell, *JPOGP* clinical editor. It was fascinating to hear how mesh surgery is affecting members and their patients in different countries: this topic has had a lot of exposure in some places, while it represented totally new information to others. A full write-up of the discussion groups will be published in the *IOPTPWH Newsletter* in due course (<https://www.wcpt.org/ioptwh/newsletters>), and a summary can be found on pp. 59–63.

Figure 2 shows attendees at the IOPTPWH networking session. I would like to encourage you to keep up to date with the association via its newsletters (<https://www.wcpt.org/ioptwh/newsletters>).



The next WCPT Congress will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 8–10 April 2021, and the one after that will be in Tokyo in 2023. The 5<sup>th</sup> European Congress of the European Region WCPT on Physiotherapy – Education will be held in Leuven, Belgium, on 11–12 September 2020.

Attending the IOPTPWH business meeting as the UK delegate was a fantastic opportunity and privilege, and I would like to thank POGP for awarding me the Dame Josephine Barnes Bursary that made this possible.

**Shirley Bustard**  
*Research Officer*

### *NHS England Clinical Entrepreneur*

I was delighted to learn that my application for a Dame Josephine Barnes Bursary had been successful. Dame Jo was present at some of the very first POGP conferences that I attended. She was president of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (now POGP), and her attendance demonstrated her commitment to women's health and the development of healthcare professionals in the field.

I am grateful that her gift of a generous bursary fund to POGP gives members such as myself an opportunity to be nurtured in their professional development in the field. For those who may not know about Dame Jo's legacy, please read the inspiring obituary published in *The Guardian* after she died (Neustatter 1999), which captures the essence of who she was. I would also ask you to pause for a moment to consider how we all share many of her professional interests within our own scope of practice. I hope that the award of a bursary to me will benefit women in a way that is in keeping with her own values.

In 2018, the National Health Service (NHS) England Clinical Entrepreneur Programme opened its application process to allied health professionals, having only been open to medical practitioners during its first 2 years. I was both excited and stunned to find that I was one of only six physiotherapists to gain a place.

My idea was simple. Every day patients said to me that they wished they had known sooner what I had told them about their pelvic floor so that they could have helped themselves. My project was to make pelvic-floor-themed animations to contribute to self-directed help prior to engagement with NHS services.

My goals are to facilitate access to: correct information about the best bladder and bowel care; pelvic floor advice for women and men;

and information about prolapse. In doing so, I want to enable self-help prior to referral to the NHS. If successful, I hope to produce a resource that will be useful to: you in the workplace; your patients; and those you do not see, who are empowered to help themselves.

After a successful application and interview, the Clinical Entrepreneur Programme offers a top-quality, 1–2-year free programme of “pit-stops” at which the entrepreneurs hear inspiring lectures about innovation, start-ups, scale-ups, pitfalls, branding, leadership, business and many other topics. Networking is key: pitching an idea is a skill to develop, and each entrepreneur is matched with a mentor to facilitate their concept. Free conference places, hot-desk locations, membership opportunities and invitations to go on trips to innovation sites are offered throughout the training period. One of my first animations is about my experience as an NHS England Clinical Entrepreneur (Sheppard 2019).

I have never learned at this pace before in my career, and I do not believe I will stop doing so. I predict that the innovation culture will quickly become accessible to all those who work in healthcare, so keep your eyes peeled! NHS Innovation has become very exciting, and the workforce will embrace dynamic approaches to solving problems that are related to patient care and the system.

My therapy lead and line managers must be acknowledged. They welcomed my place on the programme, gave me permission to be innovative, supported me with their knowledge and resources, and are helping where they can within a limited training budget. The Dame Josephine Barnes Bursary has contributed towards the cost of my travel and accommodation, animation subscription, and attendance at meetings. I am so grateful!

**Sally Sheppard**

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### References

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- Sheppard S. (2019) *My NHS England Clinical Entrepreneur Experience*. [Online video.] URL [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgzfg3eic\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgzfg3eic_g)

### **Strategic Leadership in Healthcare**

I am extremely grateful to POGP for providing me with funding to attend the “Strategic Leadership in Healthcare” module at the University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, UK. Having worked in the NHS for almost a decade, I had not previously appreciated the importance of developing my leadership skills in addition to my clinical abilities. The fundamental difference between “leadership” and “management” soon became apparent: irrespective of his or her role, a leader is someone who influences others. Poor-quality care has often been linked with ineffective leadership, and therefore, developing leadership skills is critical at all levels.

This course covers leadership styles, organizational culture, strategic decision-making and emotional intelligence. The teaching was excellent, and the tutors, who all had expert knowledge, were inspiring. During the module, I spent time shadowing several directors within my trust. This was extremely valuable because it gave me a wider appreciation of how the healthcare system works.

This course will undoubtedly improve my practice, and I would certainly recommend it to other POGP members. I would encourage all physiotherapists to consider leadership skills as an essential component of their continuing professional development.

My thanks go to POGP for providing me with this opportunity by awarding me a Dame Josephine Barnes Bursary.

**Emily Wyeth**

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### **Self-care talks for sixth-form students**

Last year, I was approached by a local secondary school in Newcastle upon Tyne, who asked if I would be interested in delivering a talk to their sixth-form students. This all-girls school offers these pupils a weekly afternoon session called “Wellness Wednesday”. This promotes well-being via talks and guest speakers. Their topic for the coming term was self-care, and a member of the school staff was struck by things that I had been discussing on social media. The

school was keen to gain my perspective as a women’s health physiotherapist on this topic.

I thought a lot about what I wanted to cover. I was aware that these students weren’t symptomatic “patients” as such, but everyone I see has been a student at some point in their lives. Therefore, I was humbled to get the opportunity to offer the girls some health education. This opportunity corresponded with a lot of research that I had been doing on the topic of self-care.

I had become increasingly aware of the lack of self-love and/or an ability to self-care displayed by the patients whom I was treating. This was particularly evident in the field of complex pelvic pain, which we are increasingly having to deal with in pelvic health physiotherapy. As a POGP physiotherapist, I felt that we should enable ourselves to address this topic comfortably and confidently with our patients. Such an approach would allow us to create a mindset that approaches pain with gentle curiosity and self-compassion.

There is an increasing body of evidence that suggests that any patients who attain a better level of self-care will naturally find it easier to work with their body as a team player. They will be able to set clear boundaries, be content with a paced recovery, and ultimately, feel empowered, in control and focused on progress rather than perfection. Surely, this is our ultimate goal as physiotherapists? Therefore, I decided to focus on the topic of self-compassion, educating the pupils about the components of this form of sympathetic pity and the problems associated with a lack of it, and comparing it to the well-known “self-esteem” industry. I used a lot of the work done by Dr Kristin Neff, who is leading the way with her research into self-compassion (Neff 2011). What I wanted to achieve was increased awareness and understanding of the self, and to encourage self-connection.

I also covered points that I thought were crucial for self-care and well-being, and I particularly focused on what science has to say on these matters. Being a physiotherapist and an evidence-based science enthusiast, I wanted to share this passion and educate the students about the biological effects of a lack of self-care. Among the things that we looked at were self-criticism and interpersonal synchronization. I shared some work by Dr Caroline Leaf, a neuroscientist, on brain diversity and causality theory (Leaf 2015, 2017, 2018). This was an attempt to help the pupils to see the real effects of our thoughts and feelings, and the implications that



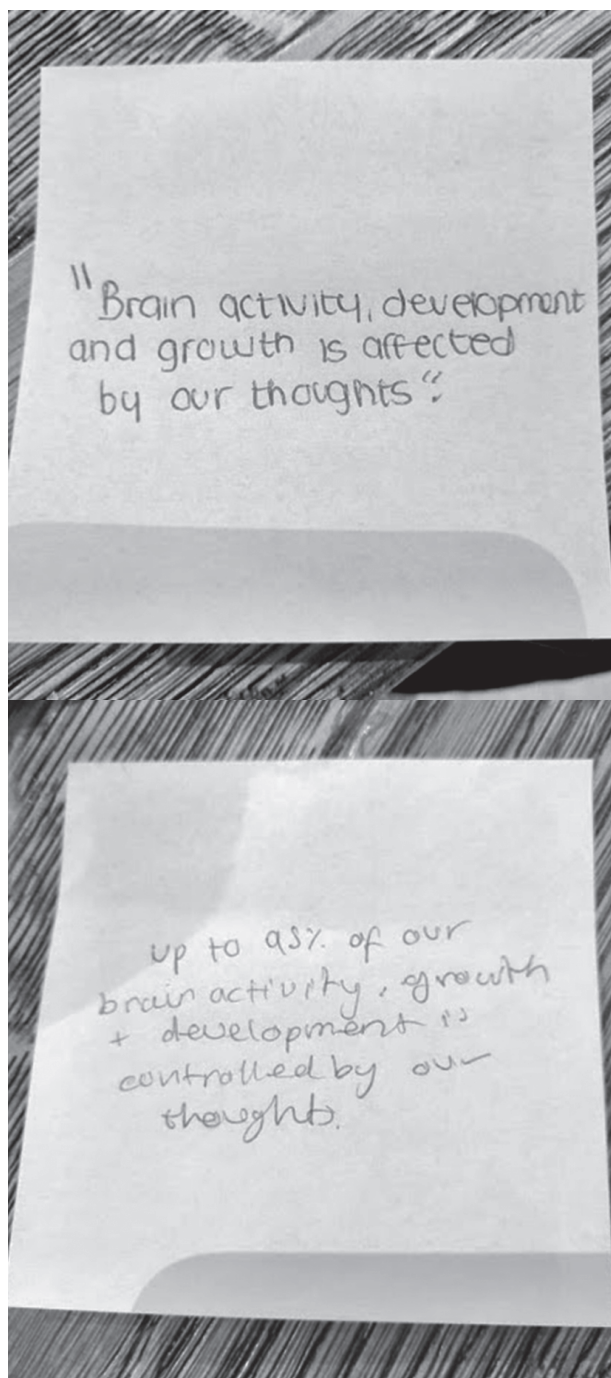


Figure 3. Post-it notes written by sixth-form students.

these have on our physiological, psychological, spiritual, neurological, endocrine and immunological systems. The neuroscientific evidence on these topics is compelling and rapidly growing.

I wanted this session to be thought-provoking, so I encouraged the students to give me feedback throughout the session. They wrote down anything that they found particularly interesting, challenging or inspiring on Post-it notes. These could then be stuck in their school diaries and read regularly over the next few weeks. Some of the notes from the session are featured in Figure 3. These also provided me with a way of

Figure 4. Feedback forms completed by sixth-form students.

identifying the messages that they picked up on most. I have now completed a couple of these sessions at different schools, and was surprised by how keen the students were on the content covered. I am always moved by the messages that they take away from the sessions, and some feedback appears in Figure 4.

Because the girls are part of a culture that thrives on “factual knowledge”, I was able to gain the girls’ trust by using a scientific approach. Young people are also drawn to honesty and vulnerability. Because our culture is in constant competition with itself, and the media industry promotes standards rather than authenticity and difference, I wanted to be a voice of truth for these pupils, and encourage them to be unique and diverse human beings. My use of my own vulnerability, and my sharing of my own journey so far towards self-worth and self-care allowed me to connect with these young people. With the turmoil that they undergo during puberty and as young adults, the sharing of a personal perspective can be a powerful tool to deliver a message of connection rather than correction. The personal touch was a great way to inspire

and disarm the destructive power of the media. Furthermore, the scientific evidence empowered my messages and gave the students confidence, which is a great balance!

As for the future, I am open to where all this is going. I have been humbled at the success of these sessions, and want to continue my work with schools. I would like to deliver sessions over a longer period in order to go into more detail with students, allow for more-interactive sessions and cover more topics. The physiotherapist in me would love to incorporate some pelvic health education, which would require more time as well. I am also keen to deliver these sessions to staff and other adults. I have received a lot of positive feedback from staff who felt that they gained a great deal from what I had to say. Educating adults would perhaps require a slightly different approach, but I would be keen to explore this possibility. After all, as we see daily in clinic, we adults are just as bad at recognizing our self-care needs and practicing self-compassion.

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## International Service Award for Gill Brook

We are delighted to announce that Gill Brook received an International Service Award at the WCPT Congress in Geneva in May this year (Fig. 5). This richly deserved honour recognizes an outstanding contribution by a physical therapist to the profession and/or global health at an international level.

Gill has worked in the field of women's and men's health since 1987, first in Hastings and then at Bradford Teaching Hospitals as part of the UK NHS. At Bradford, she developed a centre of



**Figure 5.** Gill Brook accepting the 2019 World Confederation for Physical Therapy International Service Award.

excellence for women's and men's pelvic health physiotherapy. Being actively involved in post-graduate education, she has been a member of POGP and a tutor on the urinary incontinence course for many years. Gill has published several papers and textbook chapters. She has also been a tutor on the University of Bradford Master's-level postgraduate certificate courses in women's health and continence, which lead to full POGP membership.

Throughout her career, Gill has been a passionate advocate of excellence in clinical and professional areas in POGP, and has taken on several roles to promote this to UK physiotherapists. In recognition of her work, she received a Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) Distinguished Service Award in 2007.

Gill has been actively involved in POGP as a member of the Executive Committee, chairman of the association and clinical editor of



*JPOGP*. Since these posts are all voluntary, she has given up a great deal of her own time to lead POGP, and promote its educational policies and objectives.

Gill then expanded her role from the national to the international when she became involved with IOPTPWH at its foundation, first as secretary and then as president. She has been involved with international physiotherapists shadowing at Bradford, and is always willing to help wherever she can, always giving freely of her own time to assist educational initiatives. She has organized many specialist IOPTPWH educational events at WCPT conferences, bringing people together from all over the world.

Since 2010, Gill has supported the physiotherapy team at Hamlin Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia, offering mentorship and education on her annual visits. She is a member of the Fistula Committee of the International Continence Society.

We were very happy to support Gill's nomination for a WCPT International Service Award in recognition of all her work in the UK and worldwide. She has been an exemplary ambassador of women's health and pelvic physiotherapy. She has led by example and been supportive of others, giving freely of her time, expertise and energy. Gill is a clinician, educator, leader and a wonderful person. She truly deserves this award, and POGP is delighted for her.

**Shirley Bustard**  
*Research Officer*

## Baby car seats warning

Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy public relations officer Amanda Savage is extensively quoted in an article that was published on the BBC News website in March (Gladwell 2019). She discusses the dangers of new mothers carrying their babies in first-stage car seats, an activity that can cause pelvic organ prolapse or worsen the condition.

Amanda explains that the seats are “not well designed to be a way of moving a baby around”:

“You're carrying a heavy weight off to one side[,] far away from your body[,] often with your hand turned backwards or forwards[,] and that's not a comfortable or ergonomic way to carry something.” (Gladwell 2019)

She also points out that women are “very, very vulnerable” in the first weeks after giving birth. New mothers should do as little lifting as

possible during this period, and concentrate on strengthening their pelvic floor muscles.

The article also mentions that POGP recommends mounting car seats on lightweight frames with wheels, and if possible, using the Isofix fittings on a car to minimize twisting.

However, this isn't the whole story. Amanda points out that, “We didn't instigate this article or actually have an official position on it” (A. Savage, personal communication). Furthermore, she would like to qualify her published statements:

“The BBC *wanted* us to say that car seats are badly designed, but I didn't want to say that. It didn't seem fair! They are very *well* designed for what they are meant to do, i.e. keep babies safe in the back of cars. What we were happy to highlight is that they are not the best choice to move your baby around – that is not what they are designed for! Using them like quick prams is an operator error, not a designer error!” (A. Savage, personal communication)

However, she is delighted to report that she used the POGP's closed Facebook page to ask members to pass on their thoughts on the matter to Amy Gladwell, the BBC reporter:

“Thanks to the group, I was very pleased to be able to put a comprehensive statement together. The BBC ran it, and *Frontline* and the CSP featured it later too [CSP 2019].” (A. Savage, personal communication)

**Andrew J. Wilson**  
*Managing Editor*

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## Call for a new news editor

I took over the “Notes and news” section of *JPOGP* in 2016, the same year that I began my career as a Band 6 women's and men's health physiotherapist.



What attracted me to the role of news editor was the same thing that has made it enjoyable for me: getting an insight into everything related to pelvic health! What I didn't expect was that I would be so interested in the news items being submitted, and excited about editing this content. It never fails to amaze me how dedicated the professionals working in our area of specialism are!

Being involved with the Journal Subcommittee has empowered me to: take the Bradford post-graduate qualification; network with many other volunteers and colleagues; and gain a deeper understanding of both what POGP stands for and what it is striving to achieve. If I hadn't taken on the role of news editor, I almost certainly wouldn't have contributed articles such as my product and mini-literature review of vaginal moisturizers and lubricants (Conway 2017), or my book review of *The Interstitial Cystitis Solution* by Nicole and Jesse Cozean (Conway 2019). This role has been a great addition to my curriculum vitae, and I believe that my experience of working on "Notes and news" has helped to shape me into the pelvic health physiotherapist that I am today.

Having opened a private practice while juggling numerous NHS contracts, I am finding it difficult to continue now that my 3-year stint as news editor is drawing to a close. Therefore, I will step down after the next edition in Spring 2020.

I hope that someone reading this will enquire about this fulfilling role, which will now also involve managing the journal Twitter feed (@JPOGP). I am happy to answer any questions that you may have in order to find out if this is for you (e-mail: rosieconway1234@hotmail.co.uk).

**Rosie Conway**  
*News Editor*

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## Saddle issues in female cyclists

The outside back cover of this edition features an infographic about saddle issues in female cyclists. This was created by Bianca Broadbent, a physiotherapist who specializes in bike fitting and cycling medicine. She trained at Coventry University, Coventry, UK, and qualified in 2009. Bianca now leads the biomechanics services at the Boardman Performance Centre, Evesham, UK, and also hosts courses for professionals on developing their bike-fitting skills ([www.fityourbike.co.uk](http://www.fityourbike.co.uk)). She posts on Twitter and Instagram as @thecyclephysio.

**Andrew J. Wilson**  
*Managing Editor*

## New area representative for South region

We are delighted to welcome to Alex Lambert (e-mail: [alex@physiodownbelow.com](mailto:alex@physiodownbelow.com)), who has been appointed as the new area representative for the South.

**Liz Benson**  
*Area Representative Liaison*