

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



Introduction

I am delighted to share news from the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Pelvic and Women's Health (IOPTPWH), which will give POGP members a more global view of our profession. The pandemic is still not over, and COVID-19 is affecting different countries in very different ways. Two benefits have come out of working online more: an increase in connectivity between members, and the sharing of education between countries. I was delighted to take part in the first virtual IOPTPWH delegate networking session in November 2021.

Following the 2021 online World Physiotherapy Congress (WPC), there has been an increase in interest in membership of IOPTPWH. Italy has submitted a formal application, and there have been approaches from Peru, India and Kenya. The Appointed Project Group of Education is working on guidelines to support training and competence that will cover a wide range of countries, which is a fantastic project. The five members of the Executive Committee are working very hard to develop our clinical specialty worldwide, and bring member countries together. They plan to share appropriate research projects between member countries, and I look forward to telling POGP members about these. If you have

research that you think would benefit from being shared more globally, please contact me (e-mail: Shirley.bustard@nhs.net).

Finally, I would like to remind you all that the next WPC will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on 1–4 June 2023 (Fig. 1), and we hope that it will be possible to attend this event in person.

Shirley Bustard
IOPTPWH Delegate

President's report

Kia ora noho ora mai. (Māori: "Hello, stay well.")

With vaccine rollouts surging ahead in many countries, it is now getting easier for those of us who have come out of lockdown to provide physiotherapy treatment.

The current IOPTPWH constitution is out of date, and some of its requirements are no longer applicable considering the ease with which the Internet and e-mail can be accessed today. After many rewrites to modernize our charter and bring it into alignment with that of World Physiotherapy, a draft version is now ready to send out to members for review.

We have placed our newsletters and other documents on our IOPTPWH Delegates Private Group on Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/1194604794222729). This is easy for members to access and a way to talk among ourselves.

After the success of the virtual networking session at last year's online WPC, we decided to set up a regular virtual networking session. The first was held on Tuesday 23 November at 08:00 h New Zealand Daylight Time (UTC + 13 h).

I hope that you are all safe and healthy.

Dr Melissa Davidson
President

Secretary's report

The IOPTPWH Executive Committee continues to meet via Zoom for an hour or so every couple of months. Our final session of 2021 took place in November. Last year, we worked on several projects, including: the preparation and delivery of sessions at the online WPC; collating and responding to feedback from the WPC Padlet event; and revising our new governance



Figure 1. Logo of World Physiotherapy Congress 2023.

documents, which took many hours. In July 2021, we received a request from our colleagues in Indonesia to provide a keynote address for an online conference on women's health. Vice-president Sonia Roa spoke to over 200 keen physiotherapists (see below), and received very positive feedback.

We continue to receive enquiries about membership via the World Physiotherapy website (<https://world.physio/>). The most recent enquiries have come from Peru, India and Kenya. These countries all have national groups that are recognized by World Physiotherapy. Unfortunately, countries or individuals who do not have connections with World Physiotherapy cannot become members of IOPTPWH, but we continue to communicate with these physiotherapists as "friends". A formal membership application has been received from Italy, and we look forward to welcoming this group of colleagues to our community.

The Executive Committee has received requests to provide support for the distribution of surveys to our members. The IOPTPWH mission statement and values support the important role that the organization has to play in facilitating connections between our members, and the promotion of pelvic and women's health research.

However, it should be noted that we can neither ensure the quality of the research nor endorse surveys if we distribute information on behalf of members. Therefore, if requests are deemed appropriate and in line with our purpose, we will distribute the material, but include a statement to clarify that the IOPTPWH is not involved in this survey/research. We will respect member privacy and ensure that their e-mails are not shared with any third parties.

Dr Heather Pierce
Secretary

Appointed Project Group of Education

The two subgroups of the Appointed Project Group of Education have drafted a guideline for the training and competence of physiotherapists who work within pelvic and women's health. The Executive Committee have reviewed this, and are merging all the best ideas into one document that includes everything of importance. This guideline cannot be too specific since all member countries must be able to follow it. This has been a challenge because we have high ambitions!

Since evidence-based physiotherapy is on the increase within the field of pelvic and women's health, this has necessitated the revision of



Figure 2. Screenshot of some of the attendees at the Indonesian webinar on "The Role of Physiotherapy in [the] Maternity Setting".

current curricula around the world. At the same time, any guideline must support parts of the world where this field is just beginning to be developed. Likewise, we need to consider the great diversity of educational systems worldwide, and the organization of courses outside academic settings. Nevertheless, many of the symptoms and issues that our patients present with are the same wherever we meet them. Thus, the guideline adopts the patients' perspective with the aim of treating both the common disorders and symptoms encountered by pelvic and women's health physiotherapists, and also more-complex issues.

I hope that we can find and develop new ways to exchange our knowledge, skills and experiences within the field of pelvic and women's health physiotherapy.

Dr Annelie Gutke
Member-at-large

Vice-president's report

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose significant challenges for all of us. Different countries have made unequal progress in terms of disease control and access to vaccination. Last year, I witnessed the excellent organization of

a webinar entitled "The Role of Physiotherapy in [the] Maternity Setting" by colleagues from Indonesia (Fig. 2), who were inspired by our activities at the 2021 online WPC. It was a beautiful experience: I spoke to a group of more than 250 physiotherapists and answered their questions. We hope that Indonesia will become a new member of IOPTPWH very soon.

In November 2021, I also had the opportunity to share knowledge with colleagues from Brazil at III CONIFITO, the Third International Congress of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. The theme was "Scientific Evidence as a Way to the Clinical Practice of Excellence in Physiotherapy in Women's Health". While studying for this lecture, I discovered that the prestigious journal *Nature* has a collection of articles related to women's health (www.nature.com/collections/hhegjbfdi).

As you can see, a positive aspect of the pandemic is that it has made it easier to connect with colleagues from different parts of the world. Expensive trips are no longer needed for us to collaborate. I hope we can all take advantage of these new opportunities to share our knowledge.

Sonia Roa
Vice-president