

## Profile of the new president

---

We are delighted that Miss Karen Nugent, Honorary Consultant in Colorectal Surgery and Senior Lecturer in Surgery at the University of Southampton, has agreed to become president of Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy (POGP). As a colorectal surgeon with a special interest in pelvic floor disorders and anal cancer who also runs a tertiary referral service for constipation and incontinence, she is an ideal ambassador for our newly rebranded professional network (PN).

I was given the opportunity to talk with Karen, and discovered more about her background and the career path that led to the position she holds today. I was also keen to hear her thoughts on the role of the multidisciplinary team within her speciality, and in particular, the position of physiotherapy within it.

Karen did her surgical training in Southampton, and then took a post as a research registrar at St Mark's Hospital, London, one of the world's leading colorectal treatment centres. During this period, she also spent time with Professor Bill Heald at the Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital, another internationally renowned centre of excellence for colorectal surgery.

She returned to Southampton to complete her senior registrar training. During this time, Karen spent 6 months working with Professor Roland Parc in Paris, where she learned to perform ileo-anal pouch surgery.

Her initial experience of patients with pelvic floor dysfunction came as a senior registrar in Oxford, where she worked with Professor Neil Mortensen. As the cases were distributed among the surgical trainees, it became apparent to her that she was the one being handed "the thickest set of medical notes", which belonged to the patients with pelvic floor problems. She attributes this, in part, to being the only female surgical trainee at the time.

It was in Oxford that Karen learned to perform anorectal ultrasound, which she continues to do today. She was taught by an experienced nurse specialist whom she describes as "seminal in directing her down the route of pelvic floor surgery", which illustrates the key roles that

"non-medical" team members play in the successful management of these patients.

In 1998, Karen was appointed as a consultant colorectal surgeon in Southampton. Her pelvic floor practice grew rapidly as a result of being the only female colorectal consultant in the region at that time, and she became the recipient of choice for all the complex cases referred on by her regional colleagues. Typically, she embraced this challenge, doing extensive training in all the surgical techniques used in pelvic floor surgery, including sacral nerve stimulation. Karen rapidly became aware that success with these patients depended not only on surgery, but also on "managing their expectations", and in order to do this, she needed the support of a team. She set about building a team early on in her consultant career. Recognizing the importance of adopting a holistic approach to the pelvis, rather than the professional "compartmentalization" that had been traditionally favoured, Karen included a specialist physiotherapist in the team. She attributes much of her successful practice to the colleagues with whom she works.

The National Pelvic Floor Society was instigated by Karen in 2005, initially with a "southern society", where colleagues from the Wessex region met regularly to discuss complex cases and learn from each other. This was swiftly followed by the development of a "northern society", and then one in the Midlands. A national pelvic floor meeting was held 7 years ago, and this is now run annually. It was recognized that 50% of the attendees at the initial meeting were "non-surgical" specialists, and the programme became tailored to reflect this cross-section of professionals. This year's meeting was held during the final day of the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACGBI) Tripartite Colorectal Meeting in Birmingham on 3 July, which was advertised as "Pelvic Floor Day".

Karen is currently president of ACGBI, having been secretary for the previous 3 years. She will become president of the Royal Society of Medicine Coloproctology Section next year. She is also head of the School of Surgery for Wessex

*Profile of the new president*

Deanery, Winchester, where she is responsible for postgraduate surgical training.

On a personal level, Karen manages to juggle her professional role with the demands of four teenage children. She leads a busy life on the South Coast, and escapes to her holiday home on the Isle of Wight as often as possible.

Karen was delighted to be asked to become president of POGP, and did not hesitate to accept. She is keen to learn more about our PN, and in particular, explore what she can offer in her new role.

**Kate Walsh**  
*Reviews Editor*