

Website watch

Editors' note: "Website watch" usually appears exclusively on our website, but we have decided to publish the latest instalment in this edition of the Journal to show our readers the type of material that is available online. Many members of our Association rarely use the Internet, but we hope that this article will inspire you to visit the ACPWH microsite (<http://acpwh.csp.org.uk>) to find out what else you can access. For more information on the new website, please see Karen Radford's update elsewhere in this issue (pp. 33–35).

"Website watch" is a biannual article that is usually published in the members-only *Journal* pages of the ACPWH microsite. The strengths and weaknesses of a wide range of sites have been highlighted over the years, and members are apprised of the many valuable, often printable, online resources for both physiotherapists and their patients.

The websites reviewed cover diverse areas of interest and relevance to members of the Association. Several focus on bladder and bowel dysfunction, some are concerned with specific pathologies such as ovarian cancer and endometriosis, and others deal with the wider aspects of obstetrics such as disability and parenthood. The health issues of both men and women are addressed by sites such as Wellbeing of Women (WOW; www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk) and Men's Health Forum (MHF; www.menshealthforum.org.uk). All previous website reviews and the relevant uniform resource locators (URLs) can be found within each issue of *JACPWH* published in the *Journal* section of the ACPWH microsite, and are available to view or download as individual documents, although some are grouped together. Currently, members must be logged in to access "Website watch" content. A convenient way to find all the instalments at once is to type "website watch" into the search box, which will bring up a list of direct links to each article.

Many of our patients and clients seek health-related advice or glean information about their condition from the Internet, so the circumspect physiotherapist must be aware of what they might be reading! This is perhaps most pertinent in the area of ante- and postnatal fitness, where our clients' needs, expectations and demands – both on themselves and their physiotherapists – vary enormously. The majority of the reviews that you will find in previous "Website watch" articles point out where to access high-quality information (sometimes intended for patients

and sometimes for our own ongoing education), whereas the present instalment is more concerned with raising awareness of what women will find when they turn to the Internet for advice. Scrutiny of the sites mentioned here may flag up guidance that you disagree with or would want to qualify, which should stimulate critical thinking or perhaps even inspire new ideas.

A recent trawl of the Internet using "fitness for mums" and "ante/postnatal fitness/exercise" as search terms on Google brought up an amusing array of similarly named websites differing only in their juxtapositions of "bump", "fit", "mum", hyphen, dot and so forth as the various enterprises scrambled for recognition. Sitting quietly among them all is the website of the Guild of Pregnancy and Postnatal Exercise Instructors (www.postnatalexercise.co.uk).

The stated aim of this organization is to provide networking opportunities and continuing education for qualified instructors who specialize in teaching ante- and postnatal fitness. The site can be used to search for an exercise instructor by location. Its members include Pilates teachers, personal trainers, group exercise and fitness instructors teaching exercise to music, and those organizing general fitness classes for ante- and postnatal mums. There is also an information page for mothers. The Guild has a distinctive logo (Fig. 1) that is probably worth looking out for when judging the quality of both exercise teachers and their websites.

This burgeoning field of the well-being industry has a system of regulation in place. The Register of Exercise Professionals, widely referred to as REPs, is a public register that recognizes the expertise and qualifications of instructors who offer forms of health-enhancing exercise (Fig. 2). Although there is no legal requirement for exercise teachers to be registered, membership of REPs signifies compliance with nationally agreed standards of qualification and competence. More details about levels of



Figure 1. Emblem of the Guild of Pregnancy and Postnatal Exercise Instructors.

qualification and how the standards are set can be found on the Register's website (www.exerciseregister.org). Many private enterprises have websites that advertise personal training, local groups and classes, but some of these are growing into national networks, particularly in the area of exercising while pushing a buggy in the local park. A number offer free online fitness advice that sometimes requires registration, while others charge a subscription fee.

Information is free of charge at the Fitness4Mum website (www.fitness4mum.com), which features a forum (the link is near the



Figure 2. Emblem of the Register of Exercise Professionals.

bottom of each page), and articles on topics such as safe exercise during pregnancy and alleviating back pain. Their classes are run in Yorkshire, but audio-visual exercise programmes aimed at women who prefer to exercise at home can be downloaded for about £5.00 and the "exercise of the week" video is available at no cost.

One website that appeals to me because of its overall presentation is Fitness for Mummies (www.fitnessformummies.co.uk). The presence of both the REPs and the Guild of Pregnancy and Postnatal Exercise Instructors logos is reassuring, and there is a link to the National Health Service's Change4Life site (www.nhs.uk/change4life), which promotes healthy eating and exercise for families and adults. Downloadable and printable fitness information sheets were in the pipeline as this article went to press.

Fitmums & Friends (www.fitmums.org.uk) is a club for walking and running, that also includes exercise with buggies ("buggy burn"). It started with five mums in a village in Yorkshire, but has now grown into a national network and is an affiliated UK athletic club. Fitmums & Friends uses a system known as "shepherding" to enable all standards of runners and walkers to exercise together, allowing everyone to pace themselves without pressure to keep up with others who may be faster, but also without fear of being left behind. This fits well with the concept that exercising with a peer or social group improves mental as well as physical well-being. The idea is to accommodate mixed abilities in a group providing a combination of challenge and support as appropriate.

Other Google results included Powerpramming (www.powerpramming.co.uk), a London-based organization that provides some advice pages on its website, and Buggyfit (www.buggyfit.co.uk) a nation-wide outdoor group exercise provider. Looking further afield, the US website BeFit-Mom (www.befitmom.com) has a very full advice section, but I found the format overly wordy and the small print was off-putting. There are numerous tempting topics such as abdominal reconditioning, management of rectus abdominis diastasis, and contra-indicated exercises, common discomforts and balance in pregnancy. The writer, Helene Byrne, describes herself as a professional dancer with 20 years of experience in the fitness industry. She has written three books about postnatal conditioning and the style she uses to share information on her website is perhaps more suited to a textbook. A valiant attempt is made to impart detailed know-

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ledge and instruction with enough scope to cover potential pitfalls, but the result is probably indigestible for the casual Internet surfer.

A favourable review of the BabyCentre website (www.babycentre.co.uk) by Jenny Kinahan was featured in the Autumn 2007 “Website Watch” (*JACPWH*, No. 101, pp. 111–112). Revisiting it 5 years later, I find that the site does have some pages with information and advice about postnatal exercise, but although the content of these may well be sound, the absence of pictures or diagrams detracts from the quality. Women are now more likely to turn to YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Videojug (www.videojug.com) for online demonstrations of exercise techniques.

YouTube is a well-known video-sharing website that lets anyone upload short recordings for private or public viewing. Videojug is a popular

“how to” website that hosts over 125 000 professionally produced and curated high-definition videos. These how-to guides cover an enormous range of topics, ranging from beauty and style know-how, health issues, do-it-yourself dilemmas to how best to tackle parenting problems.

To conclude this instalment of “Website watch”, I would like to reiterate my recommendation of Michelle Kenway’s website, Pelvic Exercises (www.pelvicexercises.com.au), in the Spring 2011 online edition of the *Journal* (No. 108). While the exercise advice is not specifically targeted at ante- or postnatal women, this site probably offers the best pelvic floor exercise education available online, and includes audio-visual tutorials as well as articles about safe abdominal muscle exercise.

Karen Radford

Journal Websites Editor