

## Newsletter

November 2021

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



## Committee Reports

### President: Melissa Davidson

#### President Report

Kia ora

With many countries now surging ahead with vaccine rollouts, physiotherapy might be getting easier to provide for those who have come out of lockdowns. Having the ability to do 'virtual' internal assessments would be a game changer for pelvic floor physiotherapists – maybe one day in the future this will be possible, which would make telehealth much easier.

Our current constitution is very outdated, with requirements that are no longer applicable considering the ease of access to the internet and emails today. After many rewrites to modernize it and bring it into alignment with the World Physiotherapy Constitution, we have the draft new version ready to send out to members to read and review. This will be coming out via direct email to our listed delegates of each member country. Please make sure Heather (Secretary) has your updated delegate list. It saves many hours of work if each country remembers when they change delegates to let Heather know 😊.

We have placed our newsletters and other documents on our private Facebook group as an easy place to access for members, plus a way to talk among ourselves. If you don't have access to Facebook don't worry, you will still get information sent to you directly via email, so you won't miss

out. And if you haven't joined it yet, please do. Look in Facebook for 'IOPTWH Delegates Private Group'.

After the success of the virtual networking session at World Physiotherapy Congress, we have decided to set up a regular 'Virtual Networking Session' for delegates of our member countries. The first session was on Tuesday 23 November 2021. Our second session is on Monday 14 February 2022 at 6 pm New Zealand Daylight time (UTC + 13hours). Please remember to check your own time zone to confirm the day and time as it will be different to mine. We are planning on alternating the days and times for this networking opportunity so that delegates around the world will have the opportunity to join in.

The link to join the meeting is below. You will need to download "Microsoft Teams" (free) onto your computer or mobile device prior to the session. I would also recommend you practice with it, so you know how to use your video and microphone etc.

Microsoft Teams meeting [https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_NmYxYmIzZWItOTM1Ni00NDkyLWFkYjYtOWU4MjY2NGMzODhk%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224864d5df-7a8f-4dc8-a569-de0d6a5b4406%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22736c062d-e88a-431c-bc09-b870277a09ee%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NmYxYmIzZWItOTM1Ni00NDkyLWFkYjYtOWU4MjY2NGMzODhk%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224864d5df-7a8f-4dc8-a569-de0d6a5b4406%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22736c062d-e88a-431c-bc09-b870277a09ee%22%7d)

All delegates are welcome to attend, including multiple ones from the same member country.

***Topic for this meeting is:***

1. *What resources do you have in your country that other countries might find useful?*
  - Check lists for how to do internal examinations?
  - Career pathways from undergraduate to postgraduate?
  - List of online courses in your country that is available for international access?
  - Patient handouts on POP/UI/FI/Sexual dysfunction?
  - List of you tube videos that might be useful for patients to access

- Other suggestions

2) *How can we share these resources between countries?*

- Google docs?
- FB group?
- Email?
- Dropbox?
- Other

I hope you are all safe and healthy, we are heading into our summer holiday times down here in the Southern Hemisphere, with gardens growing strongly and beaches beckoning making working on the computer less appealing!

Noho ora mai (Kia ora = Hello; Noho ora mai = Stay well)

Dr Melissa Davidson

## Vice President: Sonia Roa

### Vice President Report

We still have significant challenges to face about the pandemic. Countries have had disparate advances in disease control in access to vaccination. It represents a tremendous challenge for physiotherapists, especially women, because, in addition to fulfilling our profession, we indeed have a role as caregivers for our families. Even so, women drive the development of this beautiful profession and this area. During this period, I witnessed the excellent organization of the Webinar: The Role of Physiotherapy in Maternity Setting by colleagues from Indonesia, who were inspired by our activity at WP (photo 1 and 2). It was a beautiful experience accompanying the group of more than 250 physiotherapists, answering their questions and sharing with them the beginnings of what we hope will be a new member of IOPTPWH very soon.



Photo 1 & 2: Participants in The Role of Physiotherapy in Maternity Setting by colleagues from Indonesia



I have also had the opportunity to share with colleagues from Brazil in the III International Congress of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, with the theme: "Scientific Evidence as a way to the clinical practice of excellence in Physiotherapy in Women's Health". While studying for this lecture, I discovered from the prestigious Nature journal, the collection named "Women's Health" <https://www.nature.com/collections/hhegjbfdj>

Really worth it!

As you can see, a positive aspect of the pandemic is that it has made it easier to share with colleagues from different parts of the world and foreign languages; expensive trips are no longer needed to collaborate between us. My invitation is to take advantage and share.

Cheers!

Sonia Roa

## Secretary: Heather Pierce

Secretary Report

### **Executive committee (EC) meetings**

Your EC continues to meet for an hour or so every couple of months on Zoom. During the year, the EC have been working on several projects, including preparation and delivery of sessions at the Congress, collating and responding to feedback from the Padlet session held at the Congress, and many hours on revising our new governance documents. In July, we received a request from our colleagues in Indonesia to provide a keynote address for an online conference on women's health. Sonia Roa spoke to over 200 keen Indonesian physiotherapists and received very positive feedback.

### **Membership**

We continue to receive international enquiries for membership via the World Physiotherapy website. The most recent enquiries have come from Peru, India and Kenya. These countries all have national groups recognised by World Physiotherapy. Countries or individuals who do not have connections with World Physiotherapy unfortunately cannot be IOPTPWH Members, but we continue to communicate with these physiotherapists as 'friends'. A formal membership application has been received from Italy, so we look forward to welcoming our Italian colleagues into the IOTPWH community.

### **The role of IOPTPWH in requests to support surveys/research**

The EC has received requests for support in the distribution of surveys to Members. The IOPTPWH mission and values support the importance of role of IOPTPWH in facilitation of connections between Members and promotion of pelvic and women's health research. We note however, that if distributing information on behalf of Members, we cannot ensure the quality of the research, nor endorse surveys, and so where requests are deemed appropriate and in line with our group's purpose, we will distribute with a statement to clarify that 'IOPTPWH is not involved in this survey/research'. IOPTPWH will respect member privacy and ensure Member emails are not shared with any third parties.

I hope you all get to spend time with loved ones this Christmas, and I wish you well for 2022.

Dr Heather Pierce

### **Member at Large: Annelie Gutke**

Report from the appointed project group responsible for education

The appointed project group of Education has worked to complete a draft of a guideline for training and competence of physiotherapists within the area of pelvic and women's health physiotherapy. The two subgroups within the appointed project group produced a draft for the EC to revise. The EC has then worked with merging all good ideas into one document that include all important parts without being too specific to follow for any member countries. A challenge as we have high ambitions!

The evidence-based physiotherapy within the field of pelvic and women's health is fortunately increasing which necessitates a revision of current curriculums around the world. At the same time, the guidelines need to support parts of the world where the development of this field has just started. Likewise, we need to consider the large diversity of academic education systems among countries, and organization of courses outside the academy. Still, a large part of the symptoms and issues patients present

with, are the same wherever we meet our patients. Thus, the guidelines are taking the patients' perspective with the goal to meet the needs of common disorders and symptoms within women's and pelvic health physiotherapy, as well as complex issues.

In the Spring, a lot of time and energy was put into the World Physiotherapy 2021 where I took part in both a workshop and a seminar. I hope the content was a good source of knowledge and a time to exchange experiences with colleagues around the world!

The pandemic is not over. Taking the perspective of education once more, I hope we learn and develop new ways to exchange knowledge, skills and experiences to share within the field of pelvic and women's health physiotherapy.

Dr Annelie Gutke

## Treasurer: Meena Sran

### Treasurer's Report

As of October 19, 2021, we have 21,169.74 GBP in our account. Thank you to all member organizations who have paid their dues on time.

Expenses have been lower than usual since the last WP Congress was virtual, due to the pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr Meena Sran

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## Members Reports Germany

**AG GGUP (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Gynäkologie Geburtshilfe Urologie Proktologie)**



[www.ag-ggup.de](http://www.ag-ggup.de)

AG GGUP (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Gynäkologie Geburtshilfe Urologie Proktologie)

We are an organisation with currently 20 women on the committee. We have existed since 1985 and we wanted to have a little party with a symposium for our 35th anniversary in 2020, but unfortunately COVID came here as well, so we had to postpone it and it's now planned in early 2022.

We are running an education program for pelvic health for physios with four two-day courses and an exam after these. In these courses, the acute and chronic phase of different pelvic diseases is covered, as well as the physiotherapeutic management. We do teach vaginal and rectal palpation, although there are still legal issues with this here in Germany. We also run a couple of other courses as well, for example a psychosomatic course, an ultrasonography course or an anatomy workshop.

Recently we started to be active on social media as well with an Instagram and Facebook account.

Some of our members do help with guideline development in the pelvic health area and we have a cooperation with two other societies – one is the DGPPF,

which has a strong psychosomatic interdisciplinary background, and the other is the DKG, which is the German Continence Society.

We host a list of therapists on our website, so that patients and doctors can find specialized physiotherapists in this area.

We also offer some marketing material for physiotherapists who want to share these with doctors.

We are looking forward to a course with Maeve Whelan from Ireland who is going to hold a course for us on advanced manual therapy techniques for the pelvic floor in November.

Our symposium next year will have a program consisting of different talks i.e. on pain management, physiotherapy after transgender operations or interdisciplinary bowel management.



Photo 1: Latest reunion of AG GGUP October 2021

There are two research projects we are involved in at the moment – one is a project that investigates the benefit of pre-operative physiotherapy for post-prostatectomy incontinence, and the other is a collaboration project with midwives in order to get a better patient-centred care of women peripartally.

We don't offer a journal, but the "news" section on our homepage is updated continuously: <https://www.ag-ggup.de>. Interested physiotherapists can also receive a newsletter via e-mail if they want to.

Our main issue in general physiotherapy here in Germany is that we don't have enough physiotherapists, as we don't have enough young people who want to learn physiotherapy, probably because the reimbursement is quite low. There was a recent enhancement of 14%, so politics seem to react to the situation.

Another issue in Germany for pelvic health physiotherapists is that there is still a legal issue with vaginal/rectal palpation. Our professional organization wants to change this by an educational reform, but this will still take a couple of years.

Next year, hopefully our symposium will take place with many interesting talks and hopefully an opportunity to come together again.

I included a photo (photo 1) of our meeting one day ago – we were very happy to be able to be together, as our last meetings either had to be online because of COVID or with much more distance.

Nina Gaertner-Tschacher

Member of AG GGUP

## Belgium

ABSG-BICAP, axxon Belgian specialized group – birth core and pelvic therapy



[www.bicap.be](http://www.bicap.be)

ABSG-BICAP is a subgroup of the national organization for physical therapists Belgium AXxon, which is the parent body. Bicap as organization started in 1973, named as BGKVGPR, Belgian certified physiotherapists in obstetrics, gynecology and pelvic education. We changed the name to BICAP in the year 2016. We have almost 400 members and our goal is to organize courses in women's and pelvic health. The members are physical therapists with these interests. This interest has been acknowledged. These last 2 years we have been given webinars for the sake of covid 19. We had subjects such as: diastasis, dynamic ultrasound theory, pregnancy and the use of pessaries.

Every 3 years we try to organize a congress. The last one was the 2018 "Pelvic Health" congress in Antwerp 2018. The congress for 2021 is postponed to 2022 in Brugge and named "From Birth to Happy Mom".

We cross our fingers to be able to have the lectures live. There will be 2 days of lectures and 1 day of workshops. We contacted several international speakers, among other things: Annelies Pool, Britt Stuge, Rane Thakar, Grainne Donnelly, Emma Brockwell and Lynn Schulte.

We do have a newsletter that is sent to our members.

The members, who have a certificate in perinatal physio therapy and in pelvic health, are on a list that can be checked by specialist doctors.

**28-29-30 APRIL 2022**

**BRUGES**

*From Birth  
to Happy Mom*

**International  
congress**



[www.bicap.be](http://www.bicap.be)

To keep your certification, you should get accreditation by following enough courses. This is checked every 5 years.

Our plan and aim for the future is to start giving courses and workshops face to face.

Our biggest job now is preparing the International congress “From birth to happy mom” in Brugge (Bruges), 28-29-30 April 2022. We do hope on an international participation as we have international speakers from Sweden, the Netherlands, Canada, USA, UK, and Australia.

Christine Van De Putte

Chairman BICAP

Delegate IOPTWH

## Finland

### Finnish Association of Physiotherapists in Pelvic Floor



<http://www.pelvicus.fi/index.html>

Finnish Association of Physiotherapists in Pelvic Floor was founded 1993. The Association is a specialist member of the Finnish Association of Physiotherapists (FAP). The Society aims to unite its members, follow and develop pelvic floor physiotherapy and research. The Association has about 300 members.

The association organizes member educations 3-4 times a year. In addition, the association co-operates in education with various organisations, such as universities of applied sciences and other specialized associations. Last year and this year, however, the trainings were mostly webinars due to the covid-19 situation.

The association holds an annual national two-day conference called the "Pelvicus Days." The topics of the conference, which was held as a webinar this year, were prevention and early intervention in pelvic floor problems (Day 1) and consideration of the pelvic floor in neurological patients (Day 2). The keynote speaker on the first day was Professor Kari Bo and the keynote speaker on the second day was physiotherapist Sanna Weurlander.

However, there were several lecturers on both days, and they had been selected from a multi-professional perspective. Despite the webinar format, the conference received positive feedback. Our members were very pleased with the diverse lecturers and special thanks were given to Professor Kari Bo for her clear evidence-based presentation. The key message from these days we can say in Einstein's words: Genius will prevent, wise will treat.

Pelvic floor physiotherapy in Finland takes a holistic approach and includes evaluation of all structures which affect pelvic floor function. Physiotherapy is based on doctor's recommendations and given to children, male and female patients. It aims to prevent and care for various functional pelvic floor disorders. For example, urinary and anal incontinence, prolapse, pain and constipation.

Our association has a newsletter called Pelvicus. Pelvicus is published in Finnish four times a year, the link to the newsletter:

<http://www.pelvicus.fi/jasentiedotteet.html>

Our current problems are, of course, related to the Covid-19 situation. At worst, our member's patient reception activities declined radically. Physiotherapists who were self-employed even had to partially close their reception facilities. Physiotherapists who worked in the public sector switched to digital reception activities and other physiotherapy activities, such as ward physiotherapy. This was momentarily reflected even in the decline in the number of our members.

Fortunately, the situation is now almost completely normalized, photos 1 and 2 show one of our first in person contact education meetings, pelvic floor physiotherapy 2021. In addition, the covid-19 situation forced us to take a digital leap, which is a positive aspect of the matter.

Our member Valpuri Seikkula is representing Finland in the IOPTPWH appointed group of Education chaired by Anneli Gutke, and we look forward to a summary of this international contribution. Our association is also planning for next year the National Authorization Criteria for the name "Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy", which will naturally be influenced by the recommendation made by that IOPTPWH appointed group of education.



Photo 1: Sonopalpation in pelvic floor physiotherapy 2021



Photo 2: First contact education after Covid-19 restrictions end

Minna Törnävä

Chairman of Finnish Association of Physiotherapists in Pelvic Floor

PhD, Specialist in Sexological Counselling, Physiotherapist

Lecturer, Health and Social care, Tampere University of Applied Sciences



## Message from the Newsletter Editor: Shirley Bustard

Thank you to those countries who have submitted articles to this newsletter, especially during these unprecedented times. I do hope that you and your families are safe and well. To help share the task of producing the newsletter, I will ask a different region every six months to produce articles. There is a template to assist with this and I am very happy to give advice. Please also share any news, resources, articles or links of interest. We will rotate through the following 7 groups. For the Spring 2022 newsletter I will be contacting Europe (2\*) region: Greece, Israel, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal so I look forward to receiving your reports.

The WP Regions (and IOPTPWH group members) are

1. Asia/Western Pacific- Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore.
2. Africa-Nigeria, South Africa
3. Europe (1\*) – Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Ireland

4. Europe (2\*) – Greece, Israel, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal.
5. Europe (3\*) – Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom
6. North America/Caribbean – Bermuda, Canada, United States of America
7. South America – Brazil and Chile

Shirley Bustard

IOPTPWH Newsletter Editor

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