



International Organization of Physiotherapists in
Pelvic & Women's Health

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Newsletter August 2024





President Report

Kia ora

It seems like a long time since our last update. Winter is fast approaching those in the Southern Hemisphere, while in the Northern you are seeing blossoms and feeling the warmth of the sun.

The World Physiotherapy Congress in Dubai gave us the opportunity to connect with old and new friends alike. At the Congress we had our General Business Meeting with delegates, a networking session with delegates and other interested physiotherapists and country representatives, a social get-together for those who could make it, our exhibition hall table, a seminar session on women's health with cancer, and a pre-congress course on maternal care. There were also e-posters, Indaba sessions, abstract and poster awards, and platform presentations, as well as sub-group meetings and many networking meetings for me as President. The days were hot, long, and tiring but well worth the time and effort involved.

At the General Business Meeting we said goodbye to our retiring executive committee members of Sonia Roa (Vice President), Heather Pierce (Secretary), Meena Sran (Treasurer) and Annelie Gutke (Member at Large). They spent many hours working in their own time on IOPPWH business and have helped move pelvic and women's health forward. We also welcomed our new executive committee members of Cristine Homsy (Vice President), Carina Siracusa (Secretary), Corlia Brandt (Treasurer) and Kim Parker-Guerrero (Member at Large). I was voted back on for a second term as President and Shirley Bustard is staying on as our Newsletter Editor.

Since June 2023 the new executive committee have been working together on a variety of items with the aim of bringing you some new resources for 2024. And with World Physiotherapy Congress occurring in Tokyo, Japan on 29 – 31st May 2025, we have already started on putting education ideas and plans into place. There is a lot of things that happen behind the scenes at IOPPWH as we juggle work, home, and volunteer roles but feel free to contact us at any stage



with ideas you'd like to see implemented by IOPPWH and we'll see what we can achieve together.

Noho ora mai

Dr Melissa Davidson

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

Vice-President Report

Old Issues and New Challenges

I have been involved with this group since 2007, when it was known as the "International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Women's Health." Now, I have the honor of serving on the Executive Board as the Vice-President of the International Organisation for Physiotherapists in Pelvic and Women's Health (IOPPWH). As we reflect on our history and mission, we encounter both old issues and new challenges.

Jill Boissonnault from the USA founded and served as the first President of this group in 1998, bringing together 14 member countries. She was inspired by high-quality research highlighting the role of physiotherapists in various phases of women's lives, such as urogynecology, obstetrics, and breast health. Despite the evidence supporting the effectiveness of physiotherapeutic interventions in addressing women's health issues, access to physiotherapy services remains limited globally, necessitating educational efforts, specific skills training, knowledge translation, and advocacy.

The potential for physiotherapists to enhance women's health globally remains largely untapped. While our field possesses a vast body of knowledge, skills, and competencies in women's health, it must not be overlooked.

In May 2019, under the presidency of Gill Brook (UK) the organisation agreed a name change to International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Pelvic and Women's Health (IOPTPWH) following an extensive consultation with the membership. The name change aimed to accommodate the needs of



professionals who focus on pelvic health in men, children, and transgender populations.

This shift presented new challenges, alongside the ongoing issues that demand our attention and action to maintain progress and prevent regression in women's health physiotherapy achievements. In June 2023, under the leadership of the President Melissa Davidson (New Zealand), the organisation changed its name to the "International Organisation for Physiotherapists in Pelvic and Women's Health" (IOPPWH), aligning with the name change of World Physical Therapy to World Physiotherapy.

I am pleased that our executive board is diligently working on a strategic plan to address these challenges, ensuring that the important concerns raised by our member countries are considered and the women's health issues are not left behind. As Vice-President of this organisation, I am enthusiastic and committed to advancing our potential for leadership and transformation in research, education, and advocacy in both women's health physiotherapy and pelvic health globally.

Prof Cristine Homsí Jorge

Secretary Report

Hello everyone!

As I embark on my first year in this role I am thankful for the guidance of our previous secretary, Heather Pierce as well as the wonderful collaborative Executive Committee that I have the privilege of working with! It continues to be a busy time for secretarial duties as we start with this new Executive Committee this year. Thank you to all who have responded to emails about the following:

- Fee structure voting
- Delegate Changes
- Dues



As we have been busy working on our new strategic and business plan we have increased the cadence of Executive Committee meetings in 2024. Meetings were held in January, March, and April. The Executive Committee continues to represent the IOPPWH on collaborative subgroup meetings for World Physio on Communication, Treasury matters, and other general World Physio matters.

We continue to have great interest in the IOPPWH from new countries and expect to continue adding to our organization. If anyone has any questions about membership or needs to change their delegate, please email the secretary at ioppwh.secretary@gmail.com.

Thank you!
Dr Carina Siracusa

Finance Report

The past year has been a quiet year on the financial front. We had one minor expenditure which were for the updating of the website, as well as the bank costs related to the bank account.

We currently have only one source of income namely the membership fees. Earlier this year we circulated a notice that this year's invoices will be sent a bit later, due to the IOPPWH changing bank accounts. This is due to a change in the committee membership and treasurer, which raises difficulties when having to change access to an international bank account. We hope to have this sorted as soon as possible, after which we will send out this year's invoices.

I kindly want to request all delegates to check whether their membership fees are up to date (paid for the year April 2023 – March 2024) in the meantime. These payments can still be made to the current bank account, as per notices sent out earlier this year. Please send me an email at

ioppwh.treasurer@gmail.com should you have any questions regarding this.

We would like to thank you for participating in the voting process regarding an updated fee structure which will be implemented with the next payment. The aim of this was to enable membership countries without special interest groups, to also become a member of the IOPPWH, whilst encouraging and supporting them to start their own special interest group. After they have



formed a special interest group, they will follow the same payment structure as for those countries with a special interest group.

The other reason was to make sure that we have a fair payment structure giving small and large special interest groups a chance to belong to IOPPWH. We are anticipating a busier year ahead due to the World Physiotherapy Congress and the IOPPWH general meeting coming up in 2025.

Prof Corlia Brandt

Member at Large

Hello everyone!

I am thrilled to have been elected as IOPPWH's Member at Large for the term 2023-2027. As a newcomer to the Executive Committee (EC), I have been immersed in learning about IOPPWH's processes from our President and other EC members. My introduction to many of you took place in Dubai during the World Physiotherapy Congress in June 2023. I look forward to maintaining these connections as I work to represent you on the IOPPWH EC.

During the Congress, I particularly enjoyed the roundtable discussions where everyone shared their passions, concerns, and practice needs. I want to assure you that your feedback has been considered as the EC updates the Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 and develops the annual Business Plan. It is an honor to collaborate with a brilliant group of colleagues on the EC who bring a wealth of knowledge and a strong commitment to service.

My personal passion lies in advocacy and practice. Currently, I serve as the Director of Practice for the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Academy of Pelvic Health (APH) and as the New Mexico (NM) APTA Federal Affairs Liaison. In these roles, I work with APH and NM APTA members on various practice projects, including Position Statements and Legislative Advocacy efforts. I have also been involved with the APH Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) group, witnessing firsthand how CPGs can be implemented in practice and used to educate the public and our patients.

Recently, I have taken on the role of liaison for two important APH groups: the Health Impact Access and Equity (HIAE) Task Force and the Men's Special Interest Group (MSIG). Collaborating with these enthusiastic volunteers allows



us to expand our work and educate clinicians and the public on critical issues in important areas of practice.

As we move forward, I am excited to contribute to advancing the field of pelvic and women's health physiotherapy alongside all of you. It will take collective effort to continue pushing our profession forward.

Keep in touch,
Dr. Kim Parker-Guerrero

Call for volunteers to join one of our new Appointed Project Groups

The IOPPWH Executive Committee (EC) is seeking volunteers to form Appointed Project Groups (APGs) to focus on four different areas of interest in pelvic and women's health. These have been chosen by the EC based on what our members have expressed to us they want and need.

There are more APGs to be formed, however we are starting with these four first. We are looking for volunteers to join one of the groups to work on the following:

1. World Physiotherapy Congress (Chairperson Carina Siracusa)
2. Education of Physiotherapists (Chairperson Cristine Homsj Jorge)
3. Clinical practice guidelines and position statements (Chairperson Kim Parker-Guerrero)
4. Advocacy (Chairperson Corlia Brandt)

You need to have the following qualities:

- Time to devote to this project (time required is about 10 hours per month)
- The ability to work with technology – Dropbox, Google docs, Microsoft Word and Excel, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.
- Be willing to work in a team
- English at conversation level (written and spoken).



If you or one of your group members would like to volunteer, please send the following to our Secretary Carina Siracusa (ioppwh.secretary@gmail.com) as soon as possible:

- Name and email contact details
- Which APG you wish to apply for
- A brief Curriculum Vitae (1 page)

We are keen to get these groups working on projects as soon as possible. This is especially important for our Congress APG as it is less than 1 year out from World Physiotherapy Congress in Japan!

Dr Melissa Davidson
President of IOPPWH

Website, Facebook & E-mail

Just a reminder that our new website is up and running. www.ioppwh.org. On the website you will find information on IOPPWH, resources to download, forms to use, and information updates. And remember if your delegates are on Facebook, we have a closed group just for delegates – look up www.facebook.com/groups/1194604794222729 and ask to join. It is only open to the specified delegates of your member country so ensure you keep us updated if your delegates change.

A reminder that we have new email addresses for all committee members and our newsletter editor.

Please take note of the following and ensure your email servers allow bulk emailing from these addresses:

- ioppwh.secretary@gmail.com - Carina
- ioppwh.president@gmail.com - Melissa
- ioppwh.vicepresident@gmail.com - Cristine
- ioppwh.treasurer@gmail.com - Corlia
- ioppwh.memberatlarge@gmail.com – Kim
- ioppwh.newsletter@gmail.com – Shirley



Message from the Newsletter Editor

Thank you to those countries who have submitted articles for this newsletter. To help share the task of producing the newsletter, I will request a different region every six months to produce articles. Writing an article is part of the role of delegates and we aim to make it as least onerous as possible by providing a template and advice. Please share any news, resources, articles or links of interest. We will rotate through the following 7 groups and I look forward to receiving submissions from group 1: Asia/Western Pacific-Australia for the next newsletter.

The WP Regions (and IOPPWH group members) are

1. Asia/Western Pacific - Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and United Arab Emirates
2. Africa - Nigeria and South Africa
3. Europe (1*) – Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Latvia
4. Europe (2*) – Greece, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal.
5. Europe (3*) – Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Slovakia and United Kingdom
6. North America/Caribbean – Bermuda, Canada, United States of America
7. South America – Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Guatemala

Shirley Bustard

IOPTPWH Newsletter Editor and UK delegate



Member's reports

Brazil



Associação Brasileira de Fisioterapia em Saúde da Mulher
Brazilian Association of Women's Health Physiotherapy

The Brazilian Association of Physiotherapy in Women's Health (ABRAFISM) is a civil, non-profit association, representing Physiotherapists who work in the area of Women's Health in Brazil. It was created by physiotherapists from all over the country, gathered in an assembly during the XVI Brazilian Physiotherapy Congress (COBRAAF) held in São Paulo on October 7, 2005.

In 2023 the Association promoted its 6th Brazilian Conference of Women's Health Physiotherapy in Vitória, Espírito Santo State in Brazil and counted on the participation of the Professor Jean Hay-Smith from University of Otago, New Zealand as key-note speaker. Professor Jean talked about the preliminary results of systematic reviews conducted in collaboration with a PhD student at University of São Paulo Ana Carolina Nociti Lopes Fernandes, Professor Cristine Homsy Jorge and Professor Ana Carolina Rodarti Pitanguí. Every two years the Association organizes an International Symposium on Research and Rehabilitation of the pelvic floor with the participation of Professor Kari Bo from the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences as key-note speaker, having already had guests from various parts of the world. The event will take place in November 2024.

The current aims of the Association is to encourage the promotion of Women's Health; To promote cooperation between physiotherapists working in the area of women's and pelvic health; to encourage improvements in Physiotherapy assistance provided in the area both in public and private health system; to promote excellence in clinical practice through the exchange of information at a National and International level; to disseminate women's health among



physiotherapists, other health professionals and the lay community through the promotion of Forums, debates, campaigns, symposiums and congresses; to encourage scientific research and collaborate in the development of new knowledge around women's health; to seek support and cooperation with national and international Associations that have similar objectives. Without a doubt, one of the objectives that stands out today is to seek to influence public policies to offer the population access to the work of physiotherapists in women's and pelvic health, in addition to offering guidelines for excellent work by physiotherapists in this area

ABRAFISM has publicized its actions using social media, especially Instagram and Telegram. On Instagram we have grown exponentially, currently having twenty thousand followers. We have frequently held live events, posted educational materials and directed the lay and scientific community, in addition to numerous guidelines produced by the association. Instagram @abrafism. <https://abrafism.org.br/>

ABRAFISM identifies the population's access to quality work by physiotherapists at different levels of women's health and pelvic health as critical problems. Our campaign "For more Physiotherapists in Maternity settings" has focused on the important work of physiotherapists in maternity wards, with all their potential for transforming obstetric care. This campaign was launched in 2019 and continues to win laws in several Brazilian states, with a federal law in the works. The campaign is coordinated by Professor Cristine Homsí Jorge (Scientific Director of ABRAFISM) who, together with the Executive Committee and experienced volunteers professionals, has provided numerous training courses for evidence-based practice in maternity settings.

In 2023 we launched the second e-book of the campaign, this time with a summary of all the achievements. <https://abrafism.org.br/campanha-maternidades>

The production of guidelines for clinical practice has also been a major focus of the association's work. In 2024, the following documents were produced:



1. Prevalência e Avaliação da dor em mulheres- Prevalence and Assessment of Pain in Women
2. Diretriz de Terminologia para reportar disfunções do assoalho pélvico em Portugues/ Brasil- Guideline for reporting pelvic floor dysfunction in Portuguese/Brazil
3. Recomendações ABRAFISM: Atuação fisioterapêutica em gestantes de alto risco. ABRAFISM recommendations: Physiotherapy in high-risk pregnant women

We plan to continue offering training across the country to qualify the assistance provided by physiotherapists in Women's Health and Pelvic Health. Also to produce books and new guidelines on various topics related to Physiotherapy in Women's Health and Pelvic Health. We will hold the 7th International Symposium on clinical research focused on the female pelvic floor in November 2024.



Photo 1

The 6th Brazilian Conference of Women's Health Physiotherapy took place at Federal University of Espírito Santo State in 2023. The Conference was attended by three hundred professionals.



Photo 2

Professor Jean Hay-Smith was the international Key-note Speaker of the 6th Brazilian Conference of Women's Health Physiotherapy.



Photo 3

The first meeting for the approval of a law to give access to women to the work of the physiotherapists in maternity hospitals took place at Ribeirão Preto Medical School- University of São Paulo and was attended by representatives of the professional physiotherapy council of the States of São Paulo (CREFITO-3) and Piauí (CREFITO-14).



Photo 4

The last international Symposium gathered 200 participants interested in new high quality clinical research related to Pelvic Floor.



Photo 5

Professor Kari Bo's participation is confirmed in the 7th International Symposium of Pelvic Floor Clinical Research that will take place at Ribeirão Preto Medical School- University of São Paulo on November 22nd and 23rd



Photo 6

The ABRAFISM staff offering training and updating for professionals in the state of Piauí.



Photo7

The ABRAFISM training for professionals in the state of Pará.

Prof Cristine Homsy Jorge
Scientific Director ABRAFISM
Chief Delegate for Brazil



IOPPWH Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

The Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for IOPPWH - it guides the decision making of the Executive Committee and ensures it is aligned with the long-term objectives of IOPPWH.

Updated June 2024 by the executive committee of IOPPWH.

Vision

To provide an international support network for member countries of WP to improve health and wellbeing in pelvic and women's health.

Mission

As the international voice of physiotherapists working in the field of pelvic and women's health, our mission is to:

- Encourage collaboration between physiotherapy member country groups working in this area of interest.
- Improve health care internationally through facilitation and promotion of best practice of pelvic and women's health physiotherapy.
- To collaborate and facilitate communication and information exchange among our member groups.

Our Values

- Integrity and transparency in what we do
- Respecting the diversity, culture, and values of our members
- Encouraging professionalism and excellence in physiotherapy in pelvic and women's health



Strategic Goals

- Foster cooperation between member groups practicing in pelvic and women's health throughout the world.
- Encourage improved standards of practice and in education in pelvic and women's health care.
- Advance practice by communication and exchange of information and knowledge translation between member groups.
- Encourage scientific research and promote opportunities for the spread of knowledge of new developments in the fields of pelvic and women's health.
- Assist WP member countries in developing recognized groups in pelvic and women's health.
- Ensure that IOPPWH financial obligations in management of member funds are met.

Strategic Plan - Action Plan

Review of the strategic plan will occur every four years. A Business Plan will be produced yearly which is based on the goals within the four-year strategic plan.