

50 Years of History

Finland

Name of organisation: The Finnish Association of Orthopaedic Manual Therapy (FIAOMT)

Year organisation started: 1969

Member of IFOMPT since: 1990

Key influencers of OMPT through the years:

Norwegian physiotherapists, especially Freddy Kaltenborn and Olaf Evjenth (Kalteborn-Evjenth OMT) and Oddvar Holten (therapeutic exercise), played a significant role in training Finnish physiotherapists and doctors in the late 1960s to 1980s. The first Finnish physiotherapists attended the OMT education program in Norway - Markku Paatelma, Risto Paloheimo, Tuija Mänttari and Tiina Lahtinen. With the support of Kaltenborn and Evjenth, the first OMT education started in Finland in 1984, with head instructor, Markku Paatelma, joined two years later by Tuija Mänttari. FIAOMT has always supervised the Finnish Orthopaedic Manual Therapy (OMT) program. Many OMT physiotherapists on the FIAOMT OMT education board have helped develop the program over the years, including Eira Karvonen, who was in the first group of the Finnish OMT program.

Developments over the years:

Originally, OMT education was in two parts: a "mobilization section" lasting 1.5 years and a "manipulation section" for 1 year after a year of work experience. Subsequently, these sections have been combined to form a 2.5-year education for an award of an OMT degree.

Major changes or challenges in the last 50 years:

Over the course of their history, treatment methods evolve. New research on the multifaceted nature of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) has diversified the range of methods used by schools of manual therapy to more than just manual treatments. Treatment of MSDs should always be client centered, clinically reasoning the client's functional disability, not on the treatment method.

Current status and challenges:

The OMT program is arranged and supervised by an association, not a University. Hence the OMT degree is a big investment for the participants because studying in Finnish Universities is free of charge or minimum cost. The OMT program must be undertaken alongside work. The program is very comprehensive and demanding, with high standards. Mentored clinical practice is a big part of our program, but there are challenges and workload in conducting it in the private sector practitioners in different cities. Worldwide pandemics and war in Europe have had an influence on economics. Many organizations and private practitioners run MSD physiotherapy courses, but the OMT program in Finland has a good reputation.

The future of the organisation:

The future is bright because the core interest of enhancing physiotherapists' knowledge and skills in MSDs rehabilitation is strong and we have the best instructors in the field. We are continuously following the research and the best available knowledge to support our action in the MSD courses and in the Finnish OMT program. We are active in the OMT monitoring and have successfully implemented improvements.
