

## 50 Years of History

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### South Africa

**Name of organisation:** Neuromusculoskeletal Physiotherapy Group of the South African Society of Physiotherapy

**Year organisation started:** 1974

**Member of IFOMPT since:** 1984

**Key influencers of OMPT through the years:** Geoff Maitland first visited and taught in SA in 1971 and returned again in 1979 and in 1985, he conducted clinical workshops and was a keynote speaker at the Diamond Jubilee Congress of the SASP in Johannesburg. Seven South African physiotherapists studied under him in Adelaide. Susan Everett visited South Africa and ran courses in 1986; Gwen Jull in 1988 and 1992; and Bob Elvey in 1990. Despite the embargos imposed on the country during the 80's and early 90's, we are indebted to the international lecturers and local physiotherapists including Brun Winter, Melodene Stonestreet, Moira van Oordt, Katie Schoeman, Helen David for the pivotal role that they played, by attending the IFOMT congresses and international courses, and sharing their knowledge, as they kept our link with the international trends in OMT.

**Developments over the years:** A 1-year, part-time post-graduate course in OMT was presented in several centers across SA, evolving as the concept and practice of OMT evolved. By 1995, almost 600 post-graduate physiotherapists had completed these courses, which included a standardized national examination. In 2010, the course was standardized across all centres. The course's name changed to the Advanced Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy in 2020. As of 2023, 1762 physiotherapists have completed the course. Freda de Bruin was the original course leader in Johannesburg (South Gauteng) followed by Helen David who was course leader for 18 years. Several others played a leading role in courses across the country. Masters in OMT were established in 2007 at the University of Stellenbosch (US) and the University of Witswatersrand (UW). In 2012 these programs underwent IFOMPT International Monitoring and received accreditation. In 2015, the program at US discontinued. In 2022, the NMSPG in collaboration with UW developed a Post Graduate Diploma in NMS. Due to logistical concerns, it was discontinued at the end of 2022. We do still plan to review this program.

**Major changes or particular in the last 50 years:** The College of Physiotherapists, based largely on the Australian model was established in 1991. The OMT Specialty board consisted of Marge Steffen, Carol Cunningham, Helen David, Masha Eisenberg, Marietta Uys. This turned out not to be viable in SA as of Health Professions Council does not allow for specialization of Allied Health Professionals. This is currently still a challenge. In 2020, The OMPT group changed its name to NMSPG to represent current changes with on the field of Manual Therapy.

**Current status and challenges:** Research has not been/is still not well funded in SA. Since Covid, physiotherapists are not keen to attend in-person courses, but rather opt for online courses/workshops.

**The future of your organisation:** The SASP and NMSPG will need to become more creative and look at alternative ways to attract physiotherapists to its membership. Financial constraints, especially since Covid have played a huge impact on membership numbers. We do however plan to stay involved with international NMS trends, by attending and contributing to IFOMPT.

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