

50 Years of History

Sweden

Name of organisation: OMT section of The Swedish Associations of Physiotherapists

Year organisation started: 1966

Member of IFOMPT since: 1982

Key influencers of OMPT through the years:

Freddy Kaltenborn and Olaf Evjenth played pivotal roles when the education program began in Sweden in the late 1960s. Physician Harald Brodin contributed significantly to legitimizing this education within the medical profession. Later, several pioneering physiotherapists, as Marna Alderin, Dan Wallin, Ragnar Faleij, and Marina Wallin made substantial contributions to shaping and expanding education programs, ensuring accessibility for physiotherapists. In 1986, the first physiotherapists in Sweden graduated with their OMT-exam with Kaltenborn and Evjenth as examiners. Subsequently, Ingela Lundholm and Ragnar Faleij worked to establish OMT education. Ragnar Faleij collaborated with Peter Michaelson to launch the first university program at the master's level at Luleå University of Technology in 2012.

Development over the years:

The education program began in the late 1970s with a single program. Over the years, it expanded to be offered regularly at 4-6 different locations across Sweden. The programs were conducted at community level, but there have also been shorter courses at the university level. In 2012, the Master's program in OMT was established at Luleå University of Technology. The OMT section of The Swedish Association of Physiotherapists is one of the largest, boasting approximately 1200 members, and has maintained this status over the years.

Major changes or challenges in the last 50 years:

Running OMT education in Sweden presents a constant challenge, extending beyond merely attracting participants to our programs. It also involves cultivating an understanding that OMT education represents specialized training within musculoskeletal health. In this context, we encounter recurring resistance from other areas of physiotherapy in Sweden.

Current status and challenges:

We have been influenced by the 'Hands off' discussion, which has been quite vocal even in Sweden. After several relatively stable years, the OMT section is losing members, as is the entire Swedish Association of Physiotherapists. There seems to be a decreased interest in physiotherapy in Sweden, a trend shared with other healthcare professions. This is likely due to the negative media coverage highlighting poor working conditions in healthcare today, coupled with low salaries. Within the healthcare system itself, there's an economic crisis, leading many regions to pause further education. Consequently, opportunities for professional development and competence enhancement for physiotherapists have been significantly affected. As a result, we're currently witnessing reduced interest in our educational programs.

The future of the organisation:

There would be benefit from striving to establish ourselves within the specialist area of **musculoskeletal health**. This would signal our readiness to take responsibility for rehabilitation in this field, leveraging our expertise and educational programs to improve the health of our patients.
