

IFOMPT 2016 Conference Report – Ian Cowell

Having attended as a delegate at previous IFOMPT conferences, Glasgow provided a first time opportunity to present some of my early work from my PhD. I left the conference both inspired by the programme content and impressed by the fantastic organisation.

The personal highlights were the presentations that resonated both with my area of research and the overarching theme of the conference i.e bio-psychosocial neurocognitive approaches to treating pain.

The session on the Tuesday afternoon '**Addressing Psychosocial Issues in Low Back Pain - Can Physiotherapists do it?**' brought together an impressive panel of experts including, Kieran O'Sullivan, Zara Hansen and Lorimer Moseley and offered broad insights into the current evidence regarding physiotherapists' capability to deliver psychosocial interventions in LBP. I was left with a sense that there are still challenges ahead in this regard! We need to establish what skill level is required to be able to target psychosocial risk factors and further research will be required to optimise training within physiotherapy education.

Listening to our patients and understanding their perspectives came across strongly from many presentations, and developing effective communication skills is clearly important in targeting psychosocial risk factors. Lisa Roberts presented a great case for the power of communication and its potential to improve outcome, highlighting some practical ways of further developing communication skills.

The paradigm shift of employing a biopsychosocial approach has certainly created a dichotomy within the profession: Hands on vs. Hands off? With a strong feeling that our manual therapy skills are being 'left behind'. Brian Mulligan and Gwen Jull both voiced strong concerns in this regard and Thursday afternoon's debate '**Manual Therapy is a Questionable Tool in the Toolkit of Treatments for Low Back Pain**' produced some heavyweight clashes. Perhaps the more balanced perspective is that we have a range of tools in a clinical 'toolkit', including Manual Therapy, and the key is determining which approach best suit individual patients.

Overall a great conference and much to ponder in terms of the exciting challenges that lie ahead in implementing best evidence based approaches.