



Advanced Pelvic Floor Course

Pelvic Floor Myalgia & Genitourinary Pain Disorders

Background to the Advanced PF – Pain Course:

The field of pelvic floor physiotherapy has grown enormously in recent years, largely due to the well-researched role of PFMT and adjunctive therapies for disorders such as incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. As a result, for many physiotherapists, training in this field has primarily focused on the resolution of pelvic floor weakness related to hypotonia / PF relaxation.

In the past decade however, research has begun to also encompass pelvic floor dysfunction related to hypertonicity and pelvic floor myalgia. Not only does this scope of practice require a markedly different knowledge base and set of manual therapy skills, research is also beginning to show that these techniques may provide a possible alternate treatment plan for some of the previously regarded “pelvic floor weakness” disorders.

Who is this course most suited to:

Physiotherapists working with a women’s health / gynaecology / obstetrics caseload. It is designed for physiotherapists who already have strong skills in the assessment, diagnosis and management of the pelvic floor relaxation disorders (ie incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse etc), but may not have worked in the gynaecological pelvic pain area. It does not require previously developed skills in pelvic floor myalgia or hypertonicity. .

Pre-Requisites & Assumed Knowledge

The Advanced Pelvic Floor – Genitourinary Pain disorders course assumes that participants have a thorough knowledge of pelvic floor, reproductive, urinary and defecatory anatomy and are competent in basic vaginal examination skills including strength assessment using a Modified Oxford Scale (Grade 0-5).

BACKGROUND TO TARYN HALLAM (Director and principal lecturer at WHTA):

Taryn Hallam is a registered physiotherapist who has worked exclusively in Women's Health since 2000. Up until 2010 she was a Level 4 Senior Clinician at the Royal Hospital for Women where she held both a clinical and student supervisor role in Women’s Health.

Over the years, Taryn has designed and lectured the University of Sydney Undergraduate subject in Women’s Health Physiotherapy (2003 – 2007), and since 2012 has been the primary guest lecturer of the Gender Health Physiotherapy Subject at the Australian Catholic University. She has been involved in a number of research projects including being the primary clinician for a RCT on PFMT in conjunction with POP/SUI Surgery, and a co-supervisor for honours students undertaking research in the Women's Health Field.

Taryn has been an active member of the APA sitting on both the NSW Committee and National Committee of the Women’s, Men’s and Pelvic Health Special Interest Group. She is a member of the ICS and IUGA, and is currently the Australian representative of the Pelvic Floor Special Interest Group of IUGA. She was also the physiotherapy representative on the Australian Health and Safety Commission’s task force surrounding Vaginal Mesh (2017-2018).

Currently, Taryn splits her time between teaching and clinical roles. She regularly runs courses around Australia in Women’s Health Physiotherapy, and also runs the physiotherapy service at Alana Health Care for Women, a major obstetrics and gynaecology specialist clinic with a strong focus on chronic pelvic pain in women.

Course Content – Day One
Pelvic Floor Hypertonicity and Sexual Dysfunction

Topic 1: Setting the Scene - 2 Pelvic Pain Case Studies

The pain course commences with the group being presented with two Pelvic Pain Case studies. The case studies are specifically chosen to demonstrate very different presentations with significantly different clinical reasoning behind their diagnosis and treatment approach.

In small groups the participants are encouraged to brainstorm “First Thoughts” on each case before the presenter then gives an in-depth discussion history taking skills for complex pelvic pain patients. The two cases are then used as reference points for the remainder of the course when teaching individual topics.

Note: Within this topic a brief introduction to endometriosis will also be given.

Topic 2: Understanding Chronic Pelvic Pain in Women

The second topic is designed to then provide an overview of the diagnosis “Chronic Pelvic Pain” in women. The focus will be on the neuroanatomy underpinning multisystem presentations and will discuss concepts of antidromic propagation and the relationship to viscerosomatic, viscerovisceral and somatovisceral convergences.

Topic 3: Understanding the Assessment of Pelvic Floor Hypertonicity / Myalgia

Topic 3 begins with an introduction to the concept of Pelvic floor overactivity vs ‘high tone’ pelvic floor. Discussion will include the contribution of active and passive components to ‘tone’ and implications for assessment. The course will then explore the detailed assessment of levator ani, superficial pelvic floor, and obturator internus, including both normal contraction and normal relaxation. Finally, discussion regarding the relevance of determining causative factors of pelvic floor hypertonicity will then be discussed.

Topic 4: The balance between a Nociceptive and Centrally Mediated concept of Pain

The final topic of Day 1 will discuss the balance between approaching patients from a nociceptive vs centrally mediated pain theory. Concepts of peripheral and central sensitisation, as well as pain thresholds for nociceptive activation will be discussed with reference to implications for pelvic floor examination in the pelvic pain patient.

Vaginal Examination Practical Tutorial -

The pelvic pain course does have an additional Vaginal Examination practical tutorial that can be chosen to complete. The tutorials are run in small groups and allow physiotherapists to practice the advanced examination and treatment skills taught in the course. **NOTE: This tutorial does require participants to be willing to have an examination performed on themselves. In addition, whilst rare, participants need to be aware that the manual techniques for pelvic floor hypertonicity can result in post-treatment soreness for up to 72hours in some people.** Participants should discuss with the course presenter prior to attendance if they have any concerns regarding this component of the course.

Course Content – Day Two

Other Pelvic Pain Presentations

Topic 1: Bladder Pain Syndrome and Other Urinary Pains

This session is designed to help the practitioner distinguish urgency and frequency associated with Overactive Bladder to that of Bladder Pain Syndrome. Explanation of the global diagnosis BPS and the distinct entity of “Interstitial Cystitis” and the confusion surrounding Hunner’s Lesions and Glomerulations will be described. In addition, the role of manual therapy and other physiotherapy techniques in treating BPS, and the complex case presentation of combined OAB and BPS.

Topic 2: Anorectal Pain Disorders

This section will cover pain disorders associated not only with the process of defecation, but also generalised anorectal pain. Discussion regarding the difference between dyschezia, Chronic Proctalgia/Levator Ani Syndrome and Proctalgia Fugax will be discussed.

Topic 3: Pudendal Neuralgia and other neuropathies

This session will assist the practitioner to identify symptoms of Pudendal Neuralgia including the Nantes criteria. Information on the anatomy, location/course of the pudendal nerve will be provided as well as the various compression points including the Sacrotuberous/sacrospinous ligaments and Alcock’s canal. Other nerve entrapment conditions including inferior cluneal and obturator nerve compression will be discussed.

Topic 4: The Patient Presenting with Dyspareunia and/or other Intercourse Complaints

The focus of this section relates to sexual dysfunction. Discussion will involve not only muscular causes of dyspareunia but also conditions such as Vestibulodynia/Vulvodynia and dermatological vulval disorders such as lichen sclerosus and lichen planus. Further assessment techniques will be discussed. Finally, difficult penetration / vaginismus will be covered.

Topic 5: Management of Conditions causing Sexual Dysfunction

This session will then provide information on various manual therapy techniques that can be used to manage Pelvic Floor Hypertonicity and trigger points. The use of “Thiele” massage, contract relax, trigger point pressure, visualisation and biofeedback will all be discussed. In addition, the role of dilators and instructions for use will be given.

Enrolment forms can be found on the Women’s Health Training Associates Website: www.whta.com.au