

Women's health physiotherapy facebook group: using social media to develop an international clinical special interest group.

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Using Social Media to develop an International Clinical Special Interest Group: Women's Health Physiotherapy Facebook Group

Background - How did the Women's Health Physiotherapy Facebook group start?

The Facebook group was established in December 2013 to support twenty physiotherapists who had attended a United Kingdom based Pelvic Floor course. It has grown exponentially since its inception to become a leading International Women's Health Physiotherapy group with 2390 members (as of 3rd April, 2015) from all the World Confederation for Physical Therapy regions. The members comprise women's and men's health physiotherapy clinicians, tutors, researchers, academics, post graduate and undergraduate students.

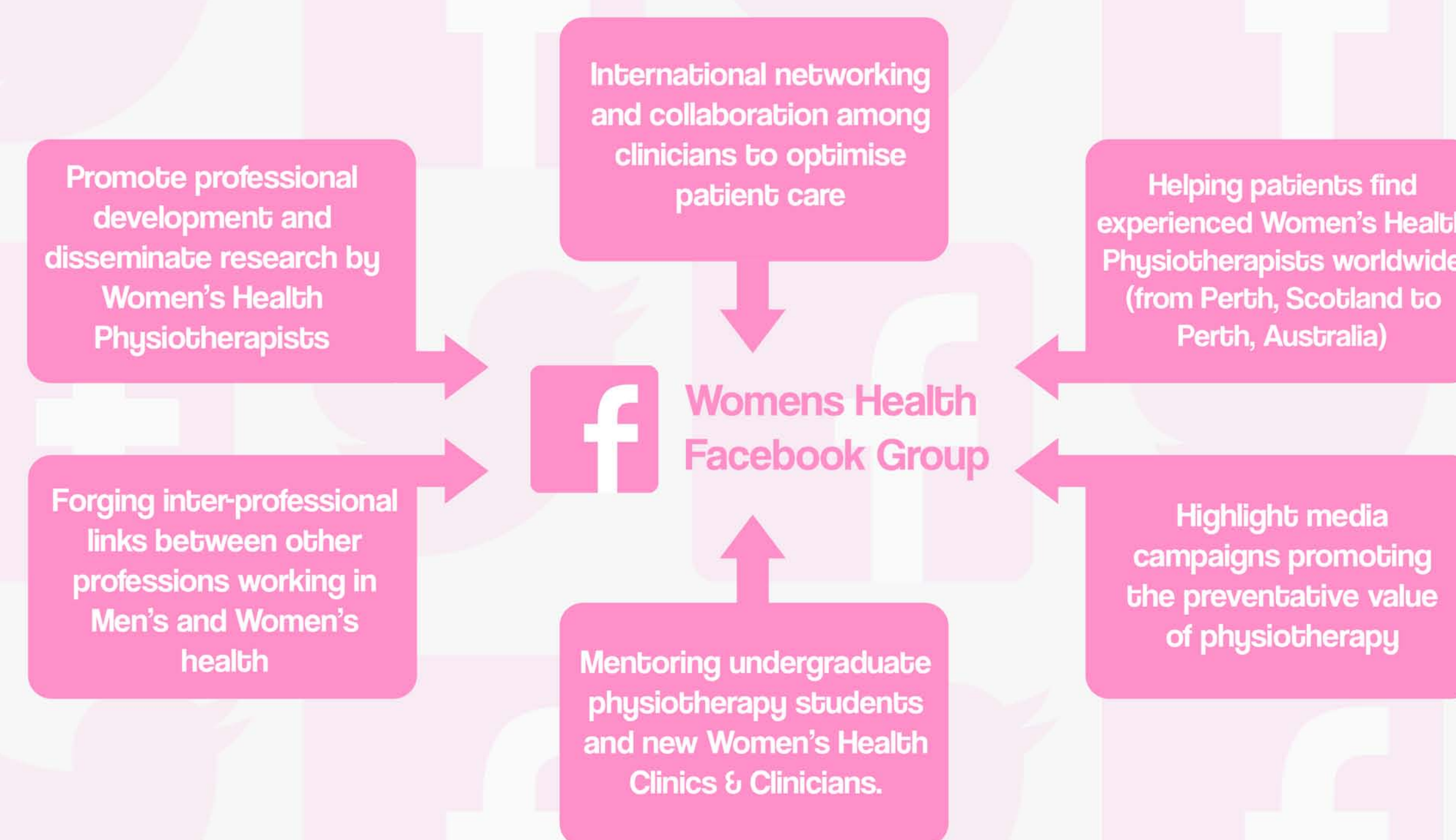
As the group has grown in numbers, the breadth of topic raised has also broadened to include all facets of pelvic health. Research has shown that social media can increase the number of people who view or download an original research article (in the clinical pain sciences area)¹. The Women's Health Facebook Group participants have embraced the opportunity presented by this collective of therapists to post up-to-date articles; to brainstorm difficult patient scenarios; to mentor each other with disregard to the number of kilometres that may present by their actual geographic location; and most importantly to promote physiotherapy as a leading, preventative health profession in pelvic floor dysfunction.

The breadth of topics covered on a daily basis include urinary incontinence, prolapse management and prevention, chronic pelvic pain including sexual dysfunction, pelvic girdle pain, post-natal rehabilitation, rectus diastasis assessment and management, colorectal issues, oncology, osteoporosis and bone health and all facets of men's health.

Method

Facebook was selected as the social media platform for the group due to its wide spread use by physiotherapists, ease of access and its functionality for posting comments, links, images and discussions. The group was established by two physiotherapists, one with expertise in social media and the other an expert clinician in women's health. This has led to other initiatives in 2014 such as supporting a Tweet Chat on Twitter with Physiotalk led by Irish physiotherapist, Teresa Costello.

Results



Then we went on Twitter!

We tweet a lot!

- # We speak with midwives, health professionals and Physiotherapists worldwide.
- # We highlight Women's Health related conferences and post from them.
- # We link with important public groups related to women's health
- # We supported the 1st Women's Health Physio Tweet Chat on Twitter with PhysioTalk lead by Irish Physio Teresa Costello.



From the Facebook Page

Examples of posts include:

- Teresa Costello PT**: Following the success of the first women's health and continence physiochat tweetchat last year, which featured input from many members of this group. I am currently finalising plans for a short series of tweetchats which will have an obstetric theme this time. I'm hoping to harness the wonderful enthusiasm and expertise of this group again for these chats. More details to follow soon!
- Laura Ramos**: I am a passionate for women's health. My father is gynecologist and took me to see my first cesarean when I was 12 year, with 14 I saw my first vagina delivery. Since my first year in the university I chose this area and I always worked exclusively with it. This group is a gift for me, here I can talk with different PTs and see different point of view, always great opinions. Thank you Gerard Greene and Michelle Lyons, I am a better PT now.
- Sue Croft**: It's only 15 mths since Gerard Greene and Michelle Lyons started our brilliant Women's Health Facebook Group? It feels like years because I have read so much, learned so much, discussed so much, laughed so much and stopped and thought about a different perspective so much. The camaraderie amongst us all (yes you included Anthony PhysioBective Lo) is wonderful and the isolation that used to accompany being a sole Women's Health Physiotherapist has disappeared when you can brainstorm a problem or throw up a discussion point and get 130 comments even if it means it's midnight and you should have been asleep 2 hours before.

Media & Health Promotion:

- Blogs:**
- # Gussiegrips (alias brilliant comedienne and Women's Health Physiotherapist, Elaine Miller, Scotland) (Pictured)
 - # Sue Croft Physiotherapist (Women's Health Physiotherapist, Brisbane, Australia)
 - # The Pelvic Guru (Written by Tracy Sher, Orlando, USA)
 - # Marianne Ryan (Women's Health Physiotherapist, New York, USA)
 - # Jenny Burrell Education (Fitness Professional Educator, United Kingdom)

Implications

- Looking Forward, Future plans:**
- # First Women's Health Facebook summit to be held in the UK, July 4th 2015
 - # To promote the work of the WCPT Women's Health group (IOPTWH)
 - # Encourage more Physiotherapy students into Women's Health
 - # Developing "Find a Women's Health Physio" service

Conclusions

The Women's Health Facebook Group has exceeded the expectations of the founding group of therapists. With world-wide reach, uptake by novice and experienced clinicians and the ability to provide novel opportunity for dissemination of evidence-based practice it has captured the enthusiasm of Women's Health physiotherapists world wide. It continues to inspire many conversations regarding pelvic floor health across the continents.

References

1. Allen HG, Stanton TR, Di Pietro F, Moseley GL. (2013) Social Media Releases Increases Dissemination of Original Articles in the Clinical Pain Sciences. PLoS ONE 8(7): e68914. Doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0068914

