

**INTERNATIONAL CONTINENCE SOCIETY (ICS) REPORT ON THE TERMINOLOGY FOR
PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE FUNCTION & DYSFUNCTION**

-Revision of Messelink et al, 2005, 24:374-380

A: NEED FOR A WORKING GROUP ON CORE PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE FUNCTION & DYSFUNCTION

- Manual palpation remains one of the most widely used and clinically relevant tests of Pelvic Floor Muscle (PFM) function. Many different professionals use the manual palpation method. Despite the publication of the original document¹ on this subject over 10 years ago, the standard terms and tests described appear to be still controversial.

- The original standardization document on this subject (Messelink et al)¹ was published in 2005. The Standardization Steering Committee (SSC) has pledged to consider ten (10) yearly review of its terminology documents. During that time, this document has been used by many health professionals in description of pelvic floor muscle function and dysfunction. In the United States, in particular, this document forms the basis for the PFM palpation examination taught to most physiotherapists (PTs). Current research and practice would benefit by having the terminology for this area clarified.

- In 2009, Marijke Slieker-ten Hove performed a face validity and reliability study of these terms². This study showed that several tests described in the original standardization document had questionable reliability. These findings seem to be corroborated by PTs in the field who feel some tests may add little value to the examination or the development of a plan of care.

- Several recent publications^{3,4} have updated some of the more clinically-based terms in this document. However, the core terms related the manual palpation and external observation of the PFM has not been reviewed or debated. These terms need additional discussion, consensus and updating.

B: SCOPE

- The Report would be clinically based and would aim to be as user-friendly as possible.
- The Report would be definitional with any necessary explanations or descriptions included as footnotes. It would be appropriately referenced.
- Primary focus will be the evidenced based description of the visual observation and manual palpation of the PFM vaginally and rectally in both men and women.
- General clinical terms included in the Female pelvic floor dysfunction (Haylen et al, 2010³) and the Conservative management of pelvic floor dysfunction (Bo et al, 2016⁴) documents will not be unduly repeated.
- Descriptions of external visual inspection at rest and during contraction of the PFM and during bearing down.
- Definitions of digital vaginal and rectal palpation including - voluntary contraction and relaxation, involuntary contraction and relaxation, non-contracting and non relaxation pelvic floor.
- Definitions of conditions including - normal, overactive, underactive, and non-functioning pelvic floor muscles.
- Terminology will align with current terminology documents.
- A literature terms analysis (bibliometric search) will be included in the process
- The working group will also consider and report optimal methods of reporting pelvic floor dysfunction
- The Report would be subject to multiple rounds of internal (WG) review (8-12 anticipated), external review (3-4 reviewers) and ICS membership (website) review.

MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUP (Anticipated)

- Chair
- Members (up to 9)

Timeline: the working group should target produce the report within 15-18 months, but with an absolute maximum of 2 years from commencement

References:

1. Messelink B, Benson T, Berghmans B, et al. ICS Standardization of terminology of pelvic floor muscle function and dysfunction: Report from the pelvic floor clinical assessment group of the International Continence Society, Neurourology and Urodynamics 24:374-380 (2005).
2. Slieker-ten Hove, MCP, Pool-Goudzwaard, AL, Eijkemans, M.J.C. et al. Face Validity and Reliability of the First Digital Assessment Scheme of Pelvic Floor Muscle Function Conform the New Standardized Terminology of the International Continence Society. Neurourology and Urodynamics 28:295–300 (2009).
3. Haylen, B.T., et al., An International Urogynecological Association (IUGA)/International Continence Society (ICS) joint report on the terminology for female pelvic floor dysfunction. Int Urogynecol J Pelvic Floor Dysfunct, 2010. 21(1): p. 5-26.
4. Bo K, Frawley H, Haylen B, et al. An International Urogynecological Association (IUGA) / International Continence Society (ICS) Joint Report on the Terminology for the Conservative and Non-pharmacological Management of Female Pelvic Floor Dysfunction. Currently in publication.