



# IUGA 50



**Working To Achieve Pelvic Floor Health for All  
Women Since 1976**

**IUGA**   
international urogynecological association

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# Foreword

It is a great honor to write the foreword for this book, celebrating **50 years of IUGA**. Reaching this milestone is indeed a cause for celebration and documenting our journey a testament to the dedication and passion of so many individuals who have shaped our Association over the years. Our deepest gratitude goes to **all the leaders and volunteers** who contributed to IUGA over these 50 years and those who have contributed in producing this historical record.

Fifty years ago, eight visionary physicians thought that an association dedicated to urogynecology was not just a good idea - but a necessity to further the cause. I am certain that our founders would be immensely proud to see how our organization has evolved: from a small interest group to the **leading international association** dedicated to the management of pelvic floor dysfunction in women. Since the very first meeting in **Mexico City**, IUGA has flourished, now boasting **more than 3,300 members across more than 110 countries and more than 35 Affiliate Societies** who strengthen our global reach. IUGA truly represents a worldwide network of professionals dedicated to advancing urogynecology.

But it's not just our numbers that have grown - our impact has too. IUGA has evolved into a powerhouse of education, research, and advocacy. What started as an Annual Meeting has transformed into a year-round effort:

- ♦ **13 Committees** working tirelessly to advance our field
- ♦ **7 Special Interest Groups** connecting experts on key topics in the field
- ♦ **Educational programs** reaching professionals around the world
- ♦ The ***International Urogynecology Journal***, the leading publication in our field
- ♦ **Patient education initiatives** ensuring accurate information empowering choice



As we celebrate this incredible milestone, we also look ahead - to the next decade, and the next 50 years! Where do we go from here?

We carry on the legacy of advocacy, education, dissemination of good quality information and guidance, and mentoring in urogynecology. Collaboration with others, including other societies, will assist us in achieving more. We look forward to exploring areas of research and innovation, and critically evaluating these. Our global outreach continues and we are committed to furthering this; it is our responsibility, now more than ever.

I think our eight founding gynecologists would agree with our vision; to achieve pelvic floor health for all women.

Here's to **50 years of IUGA** - and to the many more to come!

**Anna Rosamilia**  
IUGA President 2025-2026

# Birth of IUGA



Donald Ostergard (USA)  
IUGA Founding Member and Past President

The International Urogynecological Association (IUGA) was formed under the direction of Professor Axel Ingelman-Sundberg of Sweden and Jack R. Robertson, MD, of Santa Barbara, California in 1976 at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual FIGO General Assembly held in Mexico City. At that meeting, nine other FIGO members were invited to participate in this event: Oscar Contreras-Ortiz - Argentina, Wolfgang Fischer - East Germany, Abbo Hassan Abbo - Sudan, Bozo Kralj - Slovenia, Donald Ostergard - USA, Eckhard Petri - West Germany, Stuart Stanton - United Kingdom, Ulf Ulmsten - Sweden, and David Warrell - United Kingdom.

Professor Ingelman-Sundberg became the first President of this new society and Ulf Ulmsten became its Vice-President.

After the Society was founded, Professors Oscar Contreras-Ortiz and Donald Ostergard founded the *International Urogynecology Journal* (IJ/Blue Journal) which was first self-published in 1988 by Professor Ortiz and then by Springer Publishing Company. Professor Ortiz was the Editor in Chief and Donald Ostergard its Managing Editor, a position which he held for 17 years. Its ownership was donated to IUGA by Oscar Contreras-Ortiz in 1999 with help from Donald Ostergard.

Reference: Booklet published for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IUGA's founding in 2015 along with the personal recollections of the author of this review.

# IUGA at 50: Lecture by IUGA Past President, Harold P. Drutz

Thursday, June 19th, 2025.

In his presentation “*IUGA at 50: What Have We Learned From the Past? How Can We Use It in the Future*,” Harold P. Drutz reflects on the remarkable 50-year journey of IUGA.

Anchoring his message with Marcus Garvey’s quote “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots”, Harold emphasizes the importance of understanding history to guide progress.

From its founding in 1976, IUGA has focused on advancing care, research, and education for women with pelvic floor and urogynecological disorders, and has since grown into a globally recognized leader in the field.

Harold charts IUGA’s evolution, with its expanding membership, the establishment of the *International Urogynecology Journal* in 1988, and the leadership of the key figures who shaped the organization’s trajectory. He reflects on the changing understanding of the female pelvis—from a structure full of “holes” (urethra, vagina, and rectum, taken care of by different specialties) to the “WHOLE” pelvis managed by health care providers interested in a collaborative approach to “Female Pelvic Medicine”.

Key advancements over the past five decades include innovations in surgery and imaging, multidisciplinary collaboration, scientific breakthroughs, and a stronger focus on global inclusion and patient-centered care.

Harold honors the impact of early mentors like Jack Robertson and Axel Ingelman-Sundberg. Today, professionals should embrace the role of mentor.

Encouraging collaboration, Harold calls on researchers to engage across disciplines, whether in maternal-fetal medicine, oncology, orthopedics, or cutting-edge areas like AI and regenerative medicine. Progress is rooted in curiosity, teamwork, and a willingness to explore beyond traditional boundaries.

Harold’s advice for handling setbacks is to always encourage self-reflection and resilience in the face of rejection. The challenge for the next generation will be to continue the momentum, innovate boldly, and shape the future of urogynecology.

Celebrating IUGA’s 50th anniversary, Harold recognizes how far we have come—and how much still lies ahead.

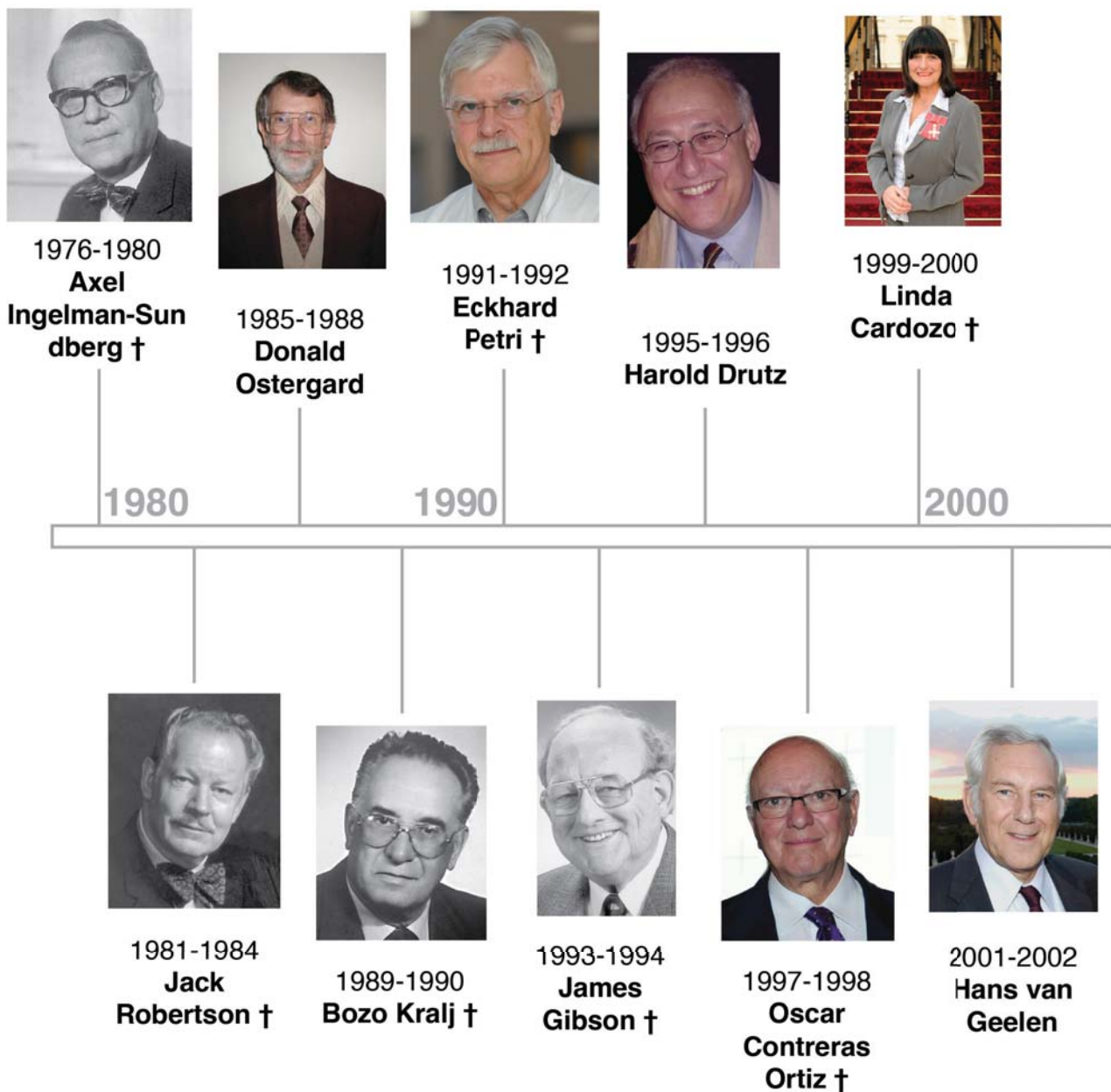
Let’s make it happen. And let’s all celebrate a half-century of progress and opportunities.





# A Legacy of Leadership

All IUGA leaders dedicate countless hours of their free time to drive the association forward. The members of the Board, particularly the President, demonstrate a special devotion and loyalty to IUGA, as serving in such a role requires sacrificing time that would otherwise be spent with family, friends, on hobbies, or other personal endeavours. The reasons that each leader has for their involvement are diverse but all have the same goal: working with our members to improve the field of urogynecology and the lives of woman suffering from pelvic floor disorders.



## IUGA Past Presidents

In 1976 Professor Axel Ingelman-Sundberg from Sweden and Professor Jack R. Robertson from the United States invited a group of their colleagues to join them at the FIGO (International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics) meeting in Mexico to establish a new society – the International Urogynecological Association. This new society's mission would be to establish a non-profit international association dedicated to the advancement of urogynecologic knowledge around the world through education and the promotion of basic and clinical research on disorders of the female pelvic floor. Over 40 years later, that same mission remains the core purpose of IUGA.





# IUGA Special Awards for Service

Recognizing excellence, dedication, and innovation has always been a cornerstone of IUGA's mission. Each year, at the IUGA Annual Meeting, we take the opportunity to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of urogynecology and to IUGA itself. Through these prestigious awards, we celebrate outstanding achievements, lifelong dedication, groundbreaking research, and exceptional service to the association and the wider urogynecological community.

## Lifetime Achievements Awards

2001



Alex Ingelman-Sundberg

2004



Jack Robertson

2006



Oscar Contreras Ortiz

2010



Hans van Geelen

2011



Eckhard Petri

2012



Gunnar Lose

2019



Peter Dwyer

2020



Harry A.M. Vervest

2021



Bob Freeman

## Lifetime Achievement Award

The **IUGA Lifetime Achievement Award** is presented to an IUGA member who has made an extraordinary impact on the organization and the field of urogynecology. This award, first introduced in 2001, was initially presented to Axel Ingelman-Sundberg, one of IUGA's founding fathers and a revered leader in the field. This honor recognizes a career characterized by exceptional contributions that have shaped the discipline and inspired future generations.

2007



Donald Ostergard

2008



Harold Drutz

2009



Bozo Kralj and James Gibson

2013



Linda Cardozo

2014



Bob Shull

2016



Carl Gustaf Nilsson

2018



Paul Riss

2022



Willy Davila

2023



Mark Vierhout

2024



Peter Sand

# IUGA Office



IUGA has been dedicated to advancing urogynecology since its establishment in 1976. Over the years, the IUGA Office has played a pivotal role in supporting the organization's mission by coordinating annual scientific meetings, facilitating research collaborations, and disseminating educational resources to healthcare professionals worldwide. The IUGA Office is the central hub for the association's activities, managing membership services, organizing events, and over-

seeing the publication of key documents such as position statements, terminology reports, and clinical guidelines. Through these efforts, the office ensures that IUGA remains at the forefront of promoting evidence-based practices in urogynecology. In addition to administrative functions, the IUGA office collaborates closely with all committees. The IUGA office staff plays a key role in upholding the association's high standards and ensuring its smooth operation.

## Rooted in the Mission: Our Journey with IUGA

By Status Plus

By the time IUGA celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2015, it had transformed from a small, volunteer-led society into a globally recognized, professionally managed association serving thousands of urogynecologists worldwide. The story, as written in the 40th Anniversary Book, is one of remarkable growth and vision.

In the early years, IUGA was run primarily by volunteers and members and supported by academic staff. In the early 2000s, this grassroots model evolved into a more structured approach.

As membership and operations expanded, IUGA established its first offices and continued to grow in the years that followed.

Annual meetings were, and still are, the cornerstone of IUGA's identity. With each year, they attracted more attendees and abstract submissions and became increasingly sophisticated. The transition toward centralized event management and planning reflected IUGA's growing professionalism and its effort to meet the expectations of a truly global membership.



IUGA also launched a range of educational initiatives, including eXchange programs, regional symposia, fellowships, and observerships, all in support of its mission to disseminate knowledge worldwide. The International Urogynecology Journal (IJU) became the leading publication in the field. The introduction of Special Interest Groups and the launch of the IUGA Academy further solidified IUGA's leadership role.

In 2011, IUGA undertook its first comprehensive strategic planning process. One of the key outcomes was the decision to further professionalize the organization by hiring an Executive Director and additional staff, as well as opening a new office in Washington, DC. Under this structure, IUGA grew to 3,000 members and continued its efforts to support the international urogynecological community. While the journey was not without its challenges, the vision of its founders, and the dedication of its leaders and members, provided the foundation for ongoing growth and success.

When the former IUGA Executive Director retired in 2016, the field of urogynecology was facing some challenges, which made the IUGA Board decide to change the management structure and contract Status Plus to provide full association and event management services. Our involvement substantially lowered the operational expenses, and we brought not only logistical expertise but also a deep-rooted connection to IUGA's history and a strong commitment to its future. Status Plus had served as the event management company for the 22nd IUGA Annual Meeting in Amsterdam in 1997. In the early 2000s, we helped recover the 'lost' domain name iuga.org and developed the first online abstract submission system used at the annual meetings in Buenos Aires and Copenhagen. From the beginning, our partnership with IUGA has been built on trust, familiarity, and a shared purpose.

Under this new management structure, IUGA entered a phase of renewed stability, modernization, and growth. Status Plus worked closely with IUGA's leadership to streamline operations, optimize internal processes, and implement modern association management practices. With

a new energetic Executive and Associate Executive Director, a dedicated Association Manager, and a committed team of support staff, we ensured continuity, reliability, and responsiveness in day-to-day operations.

Together with IUGA's leadership, we reimaged the Annual Meeting, bringing both operational efficiency and creative energy to its planning and execution. From Vancouver to Barcelona, these meetings continued to thrive while preserving the warm, collegial atmosphere that has always defined IUGA events. New formats, including virtual and hybrid meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensured that IUGA could continue to deliver value and connection to its members in every corner of the globe, even during uncertain times.

During this period, IUGA's educational offerings expanded significantly. The IUGA Academy developed into a true digital hub for webinars, courses, and other learning resources, ensuring year-round access to high-quality education. We supported the creation of new Special Interest Groups, expanded eLearning opportunities also by integrating IAPS into our educational offering to our members, and enhanced the visibility of the IJU.

In 2023, Status Plus facilitated the development and implementation of IUGA's renewed long-term strategy and goals. These now guide the association through five core focus areas: strengthening IUGA's position as the premier global authority and advocate in urogynecology; increasing participation and engagement; empowering through education; fostering a culture of innovation and research; and cultivating collaborations and partnerships. These pillars continue to shape IUGA's work and ensure it remains aligned with the evolving needs of our international community.

In addition to supporting IUGA's scientific and educational goals, we worked alongside leadership to strengthen internal operations and financial foundations. Through strategic guidance on long-term financial planning, we have helped maximize revenue opportunities while managing

expenses more efficiently. These efforts have contributed to a more sustainable financial position in 2025 and ensured IUGA is well-prepared for the future. Our collaboration also extended to the Foundation for International Urogynecological Assistance (FIUGA), where we supported promotional and operational efforts to further global impact.

As IUGA celebrates its 50th anniversary, it does so with a clear vision, a strong foundation, and an active, engaged global membership. We at Status Plus are proud to have played a part in IUGA's evolution over the past decade and honored to contribute to its ongoing mission. Rooted in the same spirit of collaboration and service that defined IUGA's early years, we look forward to continuing this journey together by supporting IUGA's growth, advancing the field, and helping urogynecologists around the world deliver the highest standard of care to the women they serve.

I would like to close on a personal note. As an association executive, I have been connected to the field of (uro)gynecology for over three decades. It has been deeply meaningful to witness and contribute to IUGA's remarkable journey. From standing at the registration desk during the 1997 Annual Meeting in Amsterdam to now leading a management company that fully supports IUGA's global mission, IUGA has always held a special place in my professional life. Its sense of purpose, active community, and commitment to excellence continue to inspire us at

Status Plus every day, and not in the least, thanks to the many IUGA leaders and members with whom we have had the privilege to work, many of whom have also become dear friends.

At the risk of overlooking someone, I would like to express special appreciation to a few individuals who, in my humble opinion, have been instrumental in keeping IUGA and us on track over the past decade. A heartfelt thank you to Harry, Willy, Bob, Lynsey, Ranee, Jorge, Fred, Anna, Linda, Montse, Dudley, Lisa, and Roy for your leadership and unwavering support of our team and to me personally. I also want to recognize all staff members who have contributed to IUGA's success over the years, with a special mention to our own team members: Tessa, Corie, Silvia, Vivian, Lilian, Siobhan, Missy, Daphne, Marlies, Alyssa, Melanie, Madeleine, Haley, Sarah, Erik, Martijn, Bilal, Gino, Chloe, Angelo, Thierry, Virag, Katherine, Emiel, and Oscar.

On behalf of all of us, it has truly been a privilege to grow alongside IUGA, and we congratulate the entire community on this landmark 50th anniversary. With pride, deep gratitude, and a genuine sense of connection with all of you, we look forward to shaping the next chapter of IUGA's journey together.

**David Casalod**  
CEO, Status Plus

# The International Urogynecology Journal (IUJ)

## The Evolution of the IUJ Cover



## Past Editors-in-Chief



**Oscar Contreras Ortiz  
&  
Donald R. Ostergard**  
1988 - 2000



**Mickey Karram  
&  
Linda Brubaker**  
2000 - 2011



**Peter L. Dwyer  
&  
Paul Riss**  
2011 - 2017



**Rebecca Rogers  
&  
Steven Swift**  
2017 - 2023



**Maria Bortolini  
&  
Kaven Baessler**  
2023 - current

The *International Urogynecology Journal (IUJ)* is the official scientific journal of IUGA, completely dedicated to female pelvic floor health. Established in 1988, the *IUJ* has played a pivotal role in disseminating research and advancing knowledge in the field of urogynecology and pelvic floor disorders and today it is the most read and cited urogynecological journal. Since its inception, the *IUJ* has provided an interdisciplinary platform for clinicians, including urogynecologists, obstetricians, gynecologists, urologists, physiotherapists, and nurses, as well as scientists and researchers specializing in urogynecology and pelvic floor disorders to publish their work.

The *IUJ* is a key benefit of IUGA membership, providing all members with access to the newest research in the field.

### The history of the *International Urogynecology Journal*

Professor Oscar Contreras-Ortiz from Buenos Aires, Argentina, one of the IUGA founding

members, also founded the *IUJ*, establishing it as a cornerstone of scholarly research and advancement in urogynecology. He served as the first Editor-in-Chief, with Donald Ostergard from Los Angeles, California serving as Associate Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor. The first issue was published in 1988 in Argentina, was 63 pages, and contained 11 articles. The first article, authored by Harold Drutz and colleagues, was on Marlex slings for recurrent stress urinary incontinence. Synthetic sub-urethral tapes as well as surgical techniques have significantly improved since and many of the landmark articles have been published in the *IUJ*.

In 2000, Oscar cemented his lasting legacy in IUGA by generously donating the *IUJ* to IUGA. Mickey Karram from Cincinnati, Ohio, took over as Editor-in-Chief, helped for one year by Linda Brubaker from San Diego, California, as Co-Editor-in-Chief. Significant changes were applied, the journal page count and yearly issues increased and with that, the impact factor increased as well.



In 2011, Peter Dwyer and Paul Riss became Editors-in-Chief. They added new sections such as *IUJ Video*, *Images in Urogynecology*, *Urogynecology Digest* and *Mentors in Urogynecology*, to increase the visibility of the journal. They also introduced the first Fellows Editor, a role designed to mentor early-career professionals and involve them in the journal's development.

Rebecca Rogers and Steven Swift continued as Editors-in Chief beginning in 2017. They continued to modernize the journal, establishing a Social Media Editor and expanding the journal's outreach and visibility. Under their leadership, the *IUJ* developed and implemented its first strategic plan, formalizing key editorial processes, defining roles and terms, and fostering greater diversity within the Editorial Board. Their efforts led to an increase in citations and strengthened the journal's scholarly impact. They also navigated the *IUJ* through the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of unprecedented submission volume across all journals. Despite this surge, their team maintained remarkably fast turnaround times—a feature of the *IUJ* that is highly valued by authors—ensuring that the *IUJ* remained a reliable, efficient, and preferred platform for publishing urogynecological research. During the pandemic, the journal published key guidance and review articles pertinent to urogynecological care during an unprecedented time in healthcare delivery.

In 2023, Maria Bortolini and Kaven Baessler assumed the role of Co-Editors-in-Chief. Though the impact factor had decreased, in part because of changes in its calculation for all journals, other key metrics like downloads and geographic diversity have grown. While many journals saw a decrease in impact factor in 2024, the *IUJ* maintained its impact factor while improving its quartile ranking from Q4 to Q3. Maintaining the quality and clinical relevance of the research published in the *IUJ* has become an increasing challenge in current academic publishing. The rise of predatory journals and paper mills, which generate fraudulent or low-quality research, poses a threat to scientific integrity. Detecting and preventing such submissions has become a major concern across the industry. However, despite these challenges, the *IUJ* has upheld its

standards, enhancing the quality of published science with more rigorous editorial practices while staying true to its international mission by welcoming research from developing regions. To ensure an unbiased reviewing process of submitted manuscripts, Kaven and Maria promoted the change to a double blind process. Also, to improve transparency, the names of the handling Editors are also published along with the manuscript.

Looking ahead, Dr. Baessler and Dr. Bortolini are committed to expanding submissions while maintaining high-quality research, ensuring the *IUJ* remains a leading journal in urogynecology. Additionally, they have strengthened the journal's partnership with IUGA, fostering greater collaboration to elevate the *IUJ*'s visibility and impact within the global urogynecological community.

### The *IUJ* Today

The *International Urogynecology Journal* continues to strengthen its impact within the field. The continued commitment to excellence is evident in its 31% acceptance rate and the diversity of its submissions, which came from 74 countries last year. With more than 1 million article downloads, the journal continues to make a significant impact around the world. The journal's most recent impact factor is 1.8, placing it 27th out of 78 journals in gynecology and 26th out of 75 in urology. As a transformative journal, the *IUJ* is seeing an annual increase in both article downloads and citations, and open access publications are expected to rise, supported by institutional agreements with our publisher. Beyond publishing metrics, the *IUJ*'s true influence is felt in clinical practice: each issue brings forward articles that address the broad spectrum of challenges faced by our urogynecological patients, often inspiring new ideas, technologies, or approaches. This success is made possible through the dedication of our outstanding Editors in Chief, Associate Editors, Managing Editor, and Editorial Board. As always, the ultimate goal of the *IUJ*—aligned with IUGA's mission—is to advance the care of women through the dissemination of knowledge and innovation in urogynecology.

2022 IJU Editors:



2024 IJU Editors:





The Foundation for International Urogynecological Assistance (FIUGA) is the foundation arm of the International Urogynecology Association. It is a US 501c(3) foundation incorporated in 2013 with the mission to improve the quality of life of women suffering from urogynecological conditions by educating local care providers in their care. FIUGA constituted its International Assistance Program, the aim of which was to create a self-sustaining urogynecology fellowship program in partnership with local hospitals and provide faculty support for the academic and surgical training of local OB/GYN-trained physicians. Accordingly, the first fellowship training program was established in Ghana in 2013, in partnership with the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, with programs in Accra and Kumasi. The program has graduated over 10 specialty trained urogynecologists to date, who have gone on to practice urogynecology in different parts of the country. In 2019, FIUGA expanded its international outreach to Nepal. In collaboration with B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, FIUGA is currently supporting its third fellowship cycle. Three fellows have already graduated and currently occupy faculty/consultant positions in their own and other esteemed institutions. Urogynecology experts from around the world have donated their time and money to travel to FIUGA supported sites to teach and provide mentorship to the fellows, for a week at a time. FIUGA has also procured urodynamics equipment for these centers.

While these achievements are commendable, it became apparent that there are three pressing challenges that needed to be addressed on a mission mode given the tremendous public health

burden posed by pelvic floor disorders globally: (i) **Need for new and complementary models of training in low and low-middle-income countries (LMICs)** given the limited access to specialty training in the countries where the disease burden is highest. (ii) **Need for advocacy for adoption of a public health approach to care of the pelvic floor in women.** Internationally maternal health forms the backbone of primary care and referral system in public health. **However, maternal care component of public health ends at six weeks postpartum universally,** despite the fact that for every woman who dies in childbirth, 30 more suffer from severe chronic maternal morbidity resulting from childbirth, including pelvic floor disorders (PFDs). Despite the substantial public health burden of PFDs, they have hitherto been neglected. Incorporation of care for chronic pelvic maternal morbidity within the ambit of national and international public health agendas is necessary. (iii) **Prevention, screening and referral pathways for perineal trauma need to be a part of national maternal practice guidelines for the frontline health workers globally.** In LMICs, the frontline midwives, health workers and non-ObGyn medical officers form the backbone of primary care and referral system in maternal health: they conduct vaginal deliveries and provide postpartum care in most rural parts of the world. However, prevention and screening of perineal trauma is not a part of national health worker training guidelines world over. Also, given the paucity of continence nurse specialists/physicians in LMICs, frontline health workers need to be trained on basic preventive, promotive and curative aspects of continence care.





To address these issues, set long-term goals and lay out a structured pro-active road map for the future, a detailed five-year plan has been created. The revised vision is a world in which every woman has access to appropriate and cost-effective preventive, promotive and curative care for pelvic floor disorders. The strategic plan consists of the following components, apart from fundraising, and ensuring sustainability of the Nepal and Ghana programs:

- ♦ **Urogynecology Enrichment Program:** FIUGA will offer a 1.5-2-year hybrid training course in collaboration with accredited medical societies in underserved countries in Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific Islands to select mid-career ObGyns with at least five years' experience with a special interest in urogynecology attached to academic institutions. Trained fistula surgeons attached to/managing an accredited fistula care hospital in Asia or Africa are also eligible. The pilot enrichment program is currently underway in Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Menopause Society.
- ♦ **Advocacy:** Long term advocacy goals include the following: chronic pelvic maternal morbidity needs to be considered a part of maternal health by national ministries of health and multilateral agencies. Public health approaches to maternal health should not end at six weeks postpartum and should extend to cover all pelvic floor sequelae of childbirth regardless



of the timeframe of development of these conditions post-delivery. Practice guidelines on prevention, screening and management of pelvic floor disorders need to be incorporated within national public health practice guidelines in LMICs for all frontline health workers. When women's health is discussed in public health forums, pelvic floor specialists need to participate to ensure that women's pelvic morbidity is given its due importance. International multilateral support for fistula care need to expand include care for other PFDs which are equally devastating in their impact on the women afflicted and society at large. FIUGA is currently writing a white paper to advocate for these goals which will be followed by a multi-pronged international advocacy effort.

- ♦ **Develop practice guidelines for the prevention, screening, referral and management of perineal trauma for frontline health workers and support the training of health workers in LMICs:** As a pilot, these guidelines have been created for frontline auxiliary nurse midwives, medical officers and obgyn specialists for the state of Telangana in India and have been converted by NGO ARMMAN into multimedia content including live-action videos, simulations, interactive quizzes and notifications. In collaboration with the Government of Telangana, NGO ARMMAN is currently conducting hybrid training of over 9000 auxiliary nurse midwives, 1500 medical officers and 400 ObGyn specialists. In the long term, once impact is proven, the guidelines can be a model for implementation in India and other countries.

## Nepal





# Ghana





# IUGA Affiliate Societies



# IUGA Board 2025

The IUGA Board serves as the leadership body guiding the IUGA's mission, strategy and global initiatives. Representing diverse regions and bringing a wealth of clinical, academic, and leadership experience, the Board is committed to advancing urogynecology worldwide.

Together, the Board has prioritized strategic growth, member engagement, and global collaboration, helping to shape the future of urogynecology.

- ♦ Anna Rosamilia (Australia)  
– President 2025-2026
- ♦ Dudley Robinson (United Kingdom)  
– Vice President 2025-2026
- ♦ Jenny King (Australia)  
– Secretary 2024-2025
- ♦ Jan Deprest (Belgium)  
– Treasurer 2025-2026
- ♦ Fred Milani (The Netherlands)  
– Immediate Past President (2025-2026)



Anna Rosamilia (Australia)  
– President 2025-2026



Dudley Robinson (United Kingdom)  
– Vice President 2025-2026



Jenny King (Australia)  
– Secretary 2024-2025



Jan Deprest (Belgium)  
– Treasurer 2025-2026



Fred Milani (The Netherlands)  
– Immediate Past President

# IUGA's Strategic Focus Areas

In 2023, using the input from the membership, the IUGA Board developed 5 new Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs) and ideas to direct the future efforts of the organization. These SFAs are the basis for all decisions and drive the organization forward by providing guidance, focusing the use of organizational resources, and defining how we will work towards our mission and vision.

## **Strengthen Our Position as the Premier Authority and Advocate in Urogynecology**

IUGA aims to solidify its global leadership by supporting high standards in training, developing clinical guidelines, and expanding its role as a trusted voice in urogynecology. This focus area emphasizes advocacy, visibility, and thought leadership across the field.

## **Increase Participation and Engagement**

Recognizing that an active and connected membership is essential to the organization's success, IUGA is committed to creating meaningful opportunities for members to contribute, connect, and feel recognized—both locally and globally.

## **Empower through Education**

Education is at the core of IUGA's mission. IUGA continuously develops and enhances learning re-

sources for professionals and patients, offering accessible, high-quality educational tools and training to support lifelong learning and professional development.

## **Foster a Culture of Innovation and Research**

IUGA supports the advancement of urogynecology through initiatives that promote research, innovation, and evidence-based practice. By identifying gaps in knowledge and encouraging exploration, IUGA helps shape the future of patient care.

## **Cultivate Collaborations and Partnerships**

Recognizing the power of working together, IUGA actively builds relationships with like-minded organizations, societies, and communities. These partnerships allow for shared expertise, broader reach, and a stronger, united voice in women's health.

These Strategic Focus Areas are not only aspirational but actionable, guiding IUGA's priorities and programs as the organization evolves to meet the dynamic needs of its global community.

## Strategic Focus Areas 2023-2027



# IUGA Committees

## Communications Committee



Chair: Deepa Gopinath (Australia)

Committee Members:

- ◆ Anne Hardart (USA)
- ◆ Arnova Reswari (Indonesia)
- ◆ Cassia Juliato (Brazil)
- ◆ Chi Chiung (Grace) Chen (USA)
- ◆ Esra Bilir (Turkey)
- ◆ Esther McNeill (United Kingdom)
- ◆ Laura Martin (USA)
- ◆ Madeline Carmain (USA)
- ◆ Pilar Martin (Australia)
- ◆ Patrick Naveen Sargunam (Malaysia)

Newly re-branded in 2025, the Communications Committee is the result of merging the Public Relations PR and Social Media Committees. The goal of the committee is to engage patients, physicians and the public to promote IUGA's mission and activities whilst improving member involvement and fostering collaborations.

Just as its predecessor, the PR Committee, the Communications Committee continues to successfully lead the the creation of a number of patient leaflets freely available to patients on [www.yourpelvicfloor.org](http://www.yourpelvicfloor.org), and made those leaflets available in a range of languages. All leaflets are regularly reviewed by all members of the committee to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Building on the success of the Social Media Committee, the Communications Committee continues to successfully grow IUGA's presence

across platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, increasing engagement and outreach.

The Communications Committee also oversees the “Awareness Months” initiative, focusing on a different theme each month to raise public awareness about various aspects of urogynecological care.

In addition, the committee leads the efforts of the Digital Resource Platform, a valuable tool for urogynecological professionals. The platform offers subscribers access to high-resolution, print-ready PDF versions of IUGA's patient brochures, enabling practices to easily print and customize professional-grade materials for their patients.

## Education Committee



Chair: Natarajan Rajamaheswari (India)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Bahiyah Abdullah (Malaysia)
- ♦ Cathy Flood (Canada)
- ♦ Charlotte Goutallier (Australia)
- ♦ Christine Chu (USA)
- ♦ Ellen Yeung (Australia) (Representative from the Fellows, Trainees, Early Career Professionals Committee)
- ♦ Erin Deverdis (USA)
- ♦ Jennifer Byrnes (USA)
- ♦ Jittima Manonai (Thailand)
- ♦ Keeth Mayakaduwege (Australia) (Representative from the Fellows, Trainees, Early Career Professionals Committee)
- ♦ Nirmala Amber Papalkar (India)
- ♦ Rajeev Ramanah (France)
- ♦ Seema Dutta (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Tanvir Singh (India)
- ♦ Woojin Chong (USA)
- ♦ Yongxian Lu (China)

The Education Committee fulfills the mission of developing, promoting and maintaining educational resources of the association. It consists of the Education Review and E-Learning subcommittees.

Projects of the Education Committee include:

### I. InSpIRE Program

At the end of 2024, the InSpIRE Recognition program was launched to address the lack of official global recognition for urogynecology as a subspecialty. Due to inconsistent training standards, urogynecological treatments and advice is given by professionals with varying expertise. InSpIRE Recognition provides

an external confirmation that practitioners have met specific learning objectives, ensuring they possess a minimum level of knowledge and practical experience. The program was met with tremendous interest from the global community—over 40 applications were received from across the world in its first round alone. This enthusiastic response highlights both the demand for standardized recognition and the dedication of urogynecology professionals worldwide to advancing the field.

The program benefits patients, medical professionals, and the field of urogynecology. For patients, it offers a way to identify practitioners with verified training, building confidence and trust in their care. For med-



ical professionals, it provides a means to distinguish themselves as experts, enhancing their careers and credibility. For the field, In-SpIRE Recognition helps raise awareness and trust, contributing to the long-term goal of establishing urogynecology as a recognized subspecialty. The program aligns with IUGA's mission to improve healthcare for women with pelvic floor disorders and supports the growth of the field.

## **2. Fundamentals Course**

The IUGA Fundamentals Course is aimed at providing essential urogynecology knowledge in regions with limited access to urogynecology subspecialty expertise. Tailored by local organizing committees to meet specific needs, the program focuses on understanding core principles and adapting them to local conditions.

## **3. IUGA Academy**

Every member has full access to the online learning portal, the IUGA Academy, with 1200+ resources including online courses, IUGA Annual Meeting materials, surgical videos, IUGA webinars and E-lectures, which are added regularly.

## **4. Podcasts**

The IUGA Podcast, produced quarterly by members of the committee, offers an informative audio platform focused on the field

of urogynecology. The Podcast explores a wide range of topics and recent advancements within urogynecology. The content is designed to support medical professionals in their clinical practice by providing insights into best practices, emerging trends, and relevant clinical information. Additionally, the IUGA Podcast serves as an accessible resource for anyone interested in learning more about urogynecology, offering a comprehensive educational experience.

## **5. Program Endorsements**

Each year, IUGA receives numerous requests from organizations seeking endorsement for their educational activities and the Education Committee has the responsibility of ensuring that the programs align with the mission of IUGA. An endorsement from IUGA serves as a validation of the educational value of the program's content. Eligible activities include multi-day conferences, specialized workshops, and webinars.

IUGA's Program Endorsements enhance global education on female pelvic floor disorders. When IUGA endorses a program, it means the content has been reviewed and aligns with IUGA's mission, vision, and core values. Additionally, the program's faculty are recognized as highly qualified to deliver clinically relevant material.



## Fellows, Trainees, and Early Career Professionals Committee



Chair: Yu Hwee Tan (Australia)

### Committee Members

- ♦ Cisel Demiralp Ovgun (Turkey)
- ♦ Ellen Yeung (Australia)
- ♦ Fazlin Azihan Harun (Malaysia)
- ♦ Ilias Liapis (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Keeth Mayakaduwege (Australia)
- ♦ Luiza Morais (Brazil)
- ♦ Masha Ben Zvi (Israel)
- ♦ Ming-Hsuan Su (Taiwan)
- ♦ Mohini Agrawal (India)
- ♦ Mosab Mahadi (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Rima Anggrenas Dasrilsyah (Malaysia)
- ♦ Rayan Mohamed-Ahmed (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Rebecca Young (Australia)
- ♦ Süleyman Serkan Karaşin (Turkey)
- ♦ Trieu Huu Do (USA)
- ♦ Victoria Buckley (Australia)

The primary responsibility of the Fellows, Trainees, and Early Career Professionals Committee is to promote the academic development of early career professionals, trainees and fellows in the field of urogynecology. This is achieved by fostering connections between trainees, fellows, and leading physicians/consultants through educational programs and meetings. The committee places a strong emphasis on cultivating international relationships and collaboration.

The committee is structured into three working groups:

#### I. Education Working Group

- ♦ **Development of Basic Videos:** This group focuses on creating 5-minute videos on basic urogynecology topics targeted at junior doctors. These videos are part of an initiative to develop new

research resources, relevant articles, and for medical student outreach webpages.

- ♦ **Mentorship Program for Medical Students and Junior Doctors:** The mentorship program is designed to support the academic and professional development of medical students and junior doctors, in urogynecology/Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery. Mentors guide students at various career stages, providing personalized advice, fostering international connections, and promoting collaboration. Mentors also support research development, conference participation, and engagement with IUGA and the IUG. Mentor positions are available to members of the Fellows, Trainees, and Early Career Professionals Committee, while trainee positions are

open to medical students and junior doctors with an interest in urogynecology.

## 2. Fellows & Research Working Group

- ♦ **Research Articles:** This group compiles, reviews, and updates a list of the most relevant, informative and recent publications on pelvic floor dysfunction annually. These articles provide up-to-date insights annually on the latest research developments in the field.
- ♦ **Urogynecology Training and Fellowship Survey:** This group is working to assess the training experiences of individuals who are less than five years post-graduation with the aim to provide valuable feedback on the urogynecology training process.

## 3. Webinars Working Group

- ♦ This group curates a part of the IUGA webinar program, selecting a diverse range of topics and speakers to ensure the sessions address relevant and timely subjects for trainees and early career professionals in the field. In line with its commitment to educating the next generation of urogynecologists, the group

collaborates with organizations like PVOGS (The Pre-Vocational Obstetrics & Gynaecology Society) to develop content tailored to medical students, residents, and junior doctors. Through these efforts, the group fosters early interest in urogynecology and builds a strong foundation for future leaders in the field.

The committee also organizes an annual Fellows Day at the IUGA Annual Meeting. This event is specifically designed to support and promote career development for younger members and students, encouraging growth within the field of urogynecology.

The Fellows, Trainees, and Early Career Professionals Committee oversees a dedicated section within the IUGA website. This section provides essential resources to support the career development of young professionals, facilitate access to research opportunities, and offer guidance on writing research papers.

Furthermore, members of this committee serve on other IUGA committees, ensuring that the perspectives of fellows and trainees are represented across IUGA's activities and initiatives.

## Fellowship Development Committee



Chair: Fiona Lindo (USA)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Aiste Ugianskiene (Denmark)
- ♦ Anupreet Dua (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Charlotte Polle (Kenya)
- ♦ Danielle Antosh (USA)
- ♦ Emmanuel Karantanis (Australia)
- ♦ Joan Melendez-Munoz (Spain)
- ♦ Leanne Brechtel (USA)
- ♦ Lisa Prodigalidad (Philippines)
- ♦ Samuel Badalian (USA)
- ♦ Sara Cichowski (USA)
- ♦ Serife Esra Cetinkaya (Turkey)
- ♦ Svjetlana Lozo (USA)
- ♦ Sylvia Botros-Brey (USA)
- ♦ Yongxian Lu (China)
- ♦ Shilpa Iyer (USA)
- ♦ Sileshi Abebe (Ethiopia)

The Fellowship Development committee is one of the newer committees within IUGA. What began as a virtual community of diverse Program Directors from around the world, grew into what we see and know as this dynamic committee. The virtual IUGA Program Directors' Forum was created in 2020 focusing on learning from and about the various training programs worldwide and gathering best practices and resources. From the virtual discussion there grew to be a unanimous understanding that there was a great need for the development of an international curriculum for urogynecology, one that would be able to be used as a template to further training of urogynecology globally. In 2021, IUGA President, Dr. Jorge Milhem Haddad, Chair of the Urogynecology Section of Hospital das Clinicas da Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, had the passion and desire to make an impact on training in urogynecology globally. One of his objectives in his presidency was to develop initiatives to

support urogynecologists in countries that had no training programs. To this end, he commissioned a committee be formed that would focus on this important to mandate. To this end, the Fellowship Development Committee of 13 members was formed under the leadership of Dr. Sylvia Botros-Brey, Program Director of the Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery Fellowship at UT Health San Antonio, in San Antonio, Texas.

Since 2021, the Fellowship Development Committee has had a pivotal role in impacting urogynecology training globally by developing significant documents to be used in support of establishing training programs. Initial work included qualitative research by formation of two focus groups comprised of faculty and Program Directors from accredited urogynecology training programs and urogynecologists who were from countries that did not have training programs. Through this important work, essen-

tial information was gathered on best practices, barriers to implementation, and innovative ways to empower and support the development of urogynecology training programs globally. The findings of this research led to the development of a list of countries that had accredited programs, and the establishing a curriculum outline of minimum core learning topics and procedures specific to urogynecology, with the goal to facilitate program development in less developed regions. In addition, the “Recommendation for Accreditation of Urogynecology Globally”, a letter of support for the global recognition of urogynecology as a sub-specialty, was developed to be used by specialists in countries where no formal training program was recognized. This letter, written with national medical certifying bodies in mind, outlines the importance of the field of urogynecology and is designed to help garner support for establishing training programs globally. Additionally, the committee created a roadmap to training in urogynecology as a subspecialty, and a comprehensive curriculum consisting of 15 modules including a toolkit which details relevant textbooks, videos, and articles that can be used in local and national curricula. It was recently published in the *International Urogynecology Journal*, “Levy G, Lindo FM, Lozo S, Prodigalidad L, Brito LGO, Lo TS, Lu Y, Antosh DD, Karantanis E, Dua A, Botros-Brey S. A Roadmap for Training in Urogynecology: IUGA International Initiative. *Int Urogynecol J*. 2024 Jun;35(6):1131-1135. doi: 10.1007/s00192-024-05789-1. Epub 2024 May 1. PMID: 38691126.”

In 2024, the inaugural IUGA Program Directors’ Meeting was organized and held at the 49<sup>th</sup> IUGA Annual Meeting in Singapore, led by Committee Chair, Dr. Fiona Lindo, Faculty, and Associate Program Director at the Houston Methodist Hospital Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery Fellowship Program in Houston, TX. Moving forward, the Fellowship Development Committee will continue to organize an in-person Fellowship Program Directors Meeting every year during the IUGA Annual Meeting. This meeting enables prospective PD’s

1. To learn about the process & resources available to help with starting a fellowship training program
2. To discuss and engage in best practices and learn from different models of fellowship training programs
3. To engage with a network Program Directors of established and newer programs to be able to learn from shared experiences.

The Fellowship Development Committee is made up of working groups to meet the larger goal and objectives of the committee, which is to support the establishment of recognized accredited training programs in urogynecology worldwide. The current working groups include the Curriculum Working Group, the Mentorship Working Group and the Program Directors’ Annual Meeting Working Group.

Current projects of the full committee include the creation of a comprehensive toolkit designed to assist countries in gaining official recognition for the subspecialty. This toolkit includes those items mentioned above: a letter from IUGA emphasizing the importance of official subspecialty recognition, a sample curriculum, and a roadmap for setting up fellowship programs. In addition, the focus is on the development of a mentorship program to support new Program Directors develop urogynecology training programs in countries where one does not exist.

The Curriculum Working Group focuses on curating resources in collaboration with the IUGA Education & Surgical Committees. The group is dedicated to providing a collection of educational materials, associated with the curriculum, ensuring that medical professionals can access the tools needed to establish high-quality fellowship programs in their respective countries. Through these efforts, they aim to expand the global network of resources to help newly accredited and established urogynecology training programs.

The Mentorship Working Group is responsible for promoting the development of urogynecology as a subspecialty in countries that lack formal training programs by engaging with specialists

from these countries to offer guidance and resources. This work fulfills the mission to foster collaboration with local societies and Ministries of Health, providing tailored advice and support for future Program Directors in countries interested in creating recognized urogynecology training programs.

By facilitating these partnerships, and through the current initiatives, the committee aims to continue to strengthen urogynecology education. Through empowerment of urogynecologists and establishing new training programs the committee will ensure global growth of the field and improve access to safe urogynecology care worldwide.

## History Committee



Chair: Mark Vierhout (The Netherlands)

### Committee Members:

- ♦ Bob Freeman (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Donald Ostergard (USA)
- ♦ Fred Milani (The Netherlands)
- ♦ Hans van Geelen (The Netherlands)
- ♦ Harold Drutz (Canada)



Co-Chair: Harry Vervest (The Netherlands)

- ♦ Kari Bø (Norway)
- ♦ Lynsey Hayward (New Zealand)
- ♦ Peter Dwyer (Australia)
- ♦ Peter Sand (USA)
- ♦ Rebecca Rogers (USA)

The History Committee was formed in 2024 with the goal of preserving and promoting the history of urogynecology and the important contributions of IUGA. The History Committee is working on several initiatives focused on promoting and integrating historical study within other areas of IUGA's activity. Amongst these initiatives is to establish a dedicated lecture during the IUGA Annual Meeting focused on historical aspects of the field. The committee is also curating the IUGA Museum - an evolving digital archive that showcases key milestones,

influential figures, and landmark achievements in urogynecology. This museum serves not only as a repository of IUGA's rich legacy but also as an educational tool for current and future generations.

The History Committee is focused on the preservation and documentation of the history of IUGA, including the production of this book and archiving historical materials, to make these readily accessible.



## Innovation, Research and Development Committee



Chair: May Alarab (Canada)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Fulya Dokmeci (Turkey)
- ♦ Gisele Vissoci Marquini (Brazil)
- ♦ Glenn Werneburg (USA)
- ♦ Indranil Banerjee (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Kristina Allen-Brady (USA)
- ♦ Lindsey Burnett (USA)
- ♦ Marair Sartori (Brazil)
- ♦ Masha Ben Zvi (United Kingdom) (Representative from the Fellows, Trainees, Early Career Professionals Committee)
- ♦ Pamela Moalli - (USA)
- ♦ Salvador Rafael Solano Sanchez (Mexico)
- ♦ Sami Shower (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Shaimaa Ibrahim (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Swati Jha (United Kingdom)

The Innovation, Research, and Development Committee (formerly known as the Research and Development Committee) plays a pivotal role in advancing research and promoting key projects in the field of urogynecology. To support researchers, the committee offers a comprehensive mentorship program that guides individuals through essential aspects of research. This program provides invaluable assistance in formulating relevant research questions, navigating funding opportunities, and mastering the intricacies of grant proposal writing. Mentors also offer expertise in refining study design, understanding clinical research statistics, and perfecting manuscript writing. Additionally, they share strategies for successful publishing and promotion, helping researchers advance in their careers.

The committee also oversees the IUGA Research Partner Network, launched in 2024, to foster global collaboration in urogynecological

research. As a leading authority in the field, IUGA is uniquely positioned to facilitate the creation of multi-center research partnerships. The network serves as a dynamic platform where researchers can connect, exchange ideas, and collaborate on ongoing projects. It offers valuable opportunities for those seeking research partners as well as those interested in joining established studies. The accompanying E-Discussion Forum further enhances global connectivity among researchers.

In addition to its mentorship and networking initiatives, the committee administers the Basic Science and Clinical Research Grants, designed to fund original research by IUGA members. All researchers, including fellows, physicians-in-training, and allied health professionals, are encouraged to apply. In line with its mission to broaden access to funding, the committee particularly invites applications from individuals in developing countries, emerging research centres, and

those with less established research records. The grants cover a range of project expenses, such as materials, testing, statistical analysis, and other essential services. Submitted applications are thoroughly reviewed and scored by the Innovation, Research & Development Committee, which then recommends grant recipients to the IUGA Board for final approval.

Furthermore, the committee ensures a fair and objective process for managing survey requests directed to IUGA members. All requests are reviewed by both the Innovation, Research, and Development Committee and the Board to ensure they align with IUGA's objectives before being shared digitally with the wider community.

## Membership Committee



Chair: Sivakumar Balakrishnan (Malaysia)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Amr Gehad (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Cornelia Betschart (Switzerland) – IAB Europe
- ♦ Emmanuel Karantanis (Australia) – IAB Oceania/Australasia
- ♦ Gazala Siddiqui (USA)
- ♦ Javier Pizarro-Berdichevsky (Chile) – IAB Latin America & the Caribbean
- ♦ JP Bagala (Uganda) – IAB Africa
- ♦ Kalaivani Ramalingam (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Nazli Hameed (Pakistan) – IAB South-eastern Asia
- ♦ Rüveyda Ölmez Yalazı (Turkey) – IAB Western Asia
- ♦ Svjetlana Lozo (USA) - IAB Northern America
- ♦ Suvit Bunyavejchevin (Thailand) – IAB SouthEastern Asia
- ♦ Tafadzwa (Tafy) Seade (Australia)
- ♦ Victoria Buckley (Australia) (Representative from the Fellows, Trainees, Early Career Professionals Committee)
- ♦ Yasukuni Yoshimura (Japan) - IAB Central & Eastern Asia

In partnership with the IUGA Board of Directors and IUGA Office, this committee works to develop and carry out strategies to recruit and retain members. The diverse representation from across the International Advisory Board (IAB) ensures that the committee is attuned to the unique needs and challenges of IUGA members globally, allowing for a more inclusive approach to membership growth. This committee is also responsible for providing guidance on membership processes, including benefits and communication.

Recent initiatives to grow membership have included expanding resources in other languages,

offering free membership to students and members from Category C countries (as defined by the World Bank Classification of Countries), and offering discounted membership for non-physician members. Additionally, the committee organizes the First-Time Attendee Meet-Up during the IUGA Annual Meetings, an in-person gathering designed to welcome new members and connect them with experienced professionals, fostering networking and engagement within the global urogynecology community.

## Nominating Committee



Chair: Fred Milani (The Netherlands)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Anna Rosamilia (Australia)
- ♦ Maria Bortolini (Brazil)
- ♦ Julien Labrie (The Netherlands)
- ♦ Symphorosa Chan (Hong Kong)

The Nominating Committee is responsible for preparing, vetting, and submitting nominations to the Board of Directors for elected positions. This committee consists of the President, the immediate Past-President, a nominated member

by the President, and two members-at-large. The Nominating Committee is also responsible for evaluating potential Conflicts of Interests of IUGA members that have a leadership position within the association.

## Publications Committee



Chair: Aparna Hegde (India)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Ganesh Dungal (Nepal)
- ♦ Gehanath Baral (Nepal)
- ♦ Hawra Badri (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Ipek Betul Ozcivit Erkan (Turkey)
- ♦ Karishma Thariani (India)
- ♦ Kazibe Koyuncu (Turkey)
- ♦ Leon Plowright (USA)
- ♦ Maherah Kamaruddin (Malaysia)
- ♦ Mohini Agrawal (India) (Representative from the Fellows, Trainees, Early Career Professionals Committee)
- ♦ Monika Gupta (India)
- ♦ Subhash Biswas (India)
- ♦ Temesgen Tilahun Bekabil (Ethiopia)

The Publications Committee is dedicated to producing and overseeing the IUGA Spotlight, the official newsletter of IUGA. The committee plays a crucial role in shaping the content of the newsletter by recommending topics that keep IUGA members informed about the association's activities, educational programs, and significant developments in the field of urogynecology. They highlight new research, clinical topics, and provide updates from across the global urogynecology community. The committee ensures that the IUGA Spotlight fosters discussion, shares knowledge, and promotes the work of IUGA's other committees and Affiliate Societies.

In addition to curating and contributing content, the committee evaluates the best platforms for dissemination—whether through the IUGA

Spotlight, online posts, or social media channels—and ensures that all content reflects a balanced and unbiased perspective. The committee also reviews drafts and identifies authors to ensure high-quality, relevant contributions to the IUGA Spotlight.

Recent focuses of the committee have been to increase diversity in the Spotlight and establishing a new online-first format, with the aim to broaden its reach, improve accessibility, and provide more engaging content for IUGA members. As part of this evolution, the Spotlight now features not only written articles but also video content, allowing for more dynamic storytelling and the opportunity to highlight voices from across the global urogynecology community.

## Scientific Committee



Chair: Abdul Sultan (United Kingdom)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Alex Digesu (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Ann-Sophie Page (Belgium)
- ♦ Baerbel Junginger (Germany)
- ♦ Barbara Bodner-Adler (Austria)
- ♦ Dina El-Hamamsy (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Howard Goldman (USA)
- ♦ Hugo van Eijndhoven (The Netherlands)
- ♦ Jan-Willem de Leeuw (The Netherlands)
- ♦ Lucila Pavan (Argentina)
- ♦ Marianne Koch (Austria)
- ♦ Markus Huebner (Germany)
- ♦ Maurizio Serati (Italy)
- ♦ Pallavi Latthe (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Patricia Driusso (Brazil)
- ♦ Rufus Cartwright (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Sheethal Madari (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Shimon Ginath (Israel)
- ♦ Steven Swift (USA)
- ♦ Tsia-Shu Lo (Taiwan)

The Scientific Committee is responsible for reviewing and scoring abstracts for IUGA's Annual Meetings, and grouping them into appropriate sessions. The abstract sessions are the backbone of the Annual Meeting, so this contribution, both to the meeting and to the individual presenters is immeasurable. There has been a growing num-

ber of abstract submissions every year, reflecting vibrant research activity in the community. For the 2025 Joint IUGA/EUGA Meeting, the Scientific Committee received and reviewed a total of 843 abstract submissions.



## Surgical Committee



Co-Chair: Catherine Matthews (USA)



Co-Chair: Mark Walters (USA)

### Committee Members:

- ♦ Aiste Ugianskiene (Denmark)
- ♦ Amr Sherif El Haraki (USA)
- ♦ Antonette Ramos Pesebre (Philippines)
- ♦ Atieh Novin (USA)
- ♦ Bulut Varlı (Turkey)
- ♦ Harpreet Arora (Australia)
- ♦ John Gebhart (USA)
- ♦ Karl Jallad (Lebanon)
- ♦ Lucila Pavan (Argentina)
- ♦ Manjula Annappa (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Mugdha Kulkarni (Australia)
- ♦ Paul Muwanguzi (Uganda)
- ♦ Savitha Krishnan (USA)

Formed in 2024, the Surgical Committee is dedicated to providing surgical education for IUGA members and serving as the premier authority on surgical innovation in urogynecology worldwide. The committee's vision is to deliver high-quality surgical education to urogynecologists worldwide through a curated digital platform.

The Surgical Committee has implemented several key initiatives to enhance educational resources and support the urogynecology community. It curates and promotes the International Academy of Pelvic Surgery (IAPS), which was generously donated to IUGA by Mickey Karram, Mark Walters, and Cheryl Perrero and features over 500 surgical videos, ensuring access to cutting-edge educational materials. To raise awareness of IAPS among IUGA members, the committee launched a video competition that attracted over 70 sub-

missions in 2024. Selected through a peer-review process, the top 12 videos will be highlighted monthly in 2025.

Additionally, the committee publishes a monthly review of the Top 10 High-Impact Articles from leading journals on IAPS. Another initiative has been to develop Surgical Masterclass sessions during the IUGA Annual Meeting.

Looking ahead, the Surgical Committee plans to implement initiatives aimed at improving surgical outcomes for common urogynecological procedures, increasing the adoption of best practices and innovations in surgery, and enhancing pre-operative case preparation and selection. The committee also seeks to efficiently disseminate high-impact literature and expand IUGA membership and visibility on a global scale.

## Terminology and Standardization Committee



Chair: Sarah Collins (USA)

### Committee Members:

- ♦ Ashwini Kale (India)
- ♦ Constantin Durnea (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Genevieve Nadeau (Canada)
- ♦ Joseph Kowalski (USA)
- ♦ Juraj Letko (USA)
- ♦ Magdalena Grzybowska (Poland)
- ♦ Mehmet Murat Seval (Turkey)
- ♦ Naheed Kapadia (UAE)
- ♦ Oriol Porta (Spain)
- ♦ Peter De Kuyper (Belgium)
- ♦ Ruchi Singh (Australia)
- ♦ Said Yaiesh (Australia)

The Terminology and Standardization (T&S) Committee develops and manages IUGA's terminology and standardization documents. The T&S Committee identifies areas of practice in which guidelines and terminology are not well established or in which terminology is poorly standardized with the aim to create standardization across the field. The committee is also responsible for updating outdated documents,

developing ideas for needed standardization, and recommending collaboration with other societies as is appropriate.

T&S Committee documents meet rigorous scientific standards and are reviewed by IUGA members and leadership (as well as that of any partnering societies) to maintain high quality standards. They are published in the *IUJ* and on the IUGA website.

## Workshop Committee



Chair: Ivilina Pandeva (United Kingdom)

Committee Members:

- ♦ Harini Sivamani (India)
- ♦ Jerome Melon (Australia)
- ♦ Monika Vij (United Kingdom)
- ♦ Pushpa Sachdev (Pakistan)
- ♦ Paulin Wai Sze MA (Hong Kong)

The Workshop Committee is responsible for ensuring the success of the IUGA Annual Meetings by overseeing the workshop submission process and acceptance. Their primary responsibility is to review and acceptance all submitted workshop proposals and provide recommendations on acceptance. The committee carefully evaluates each submission based on its relevance, quality, novelty, and potential impact, ensuring a diverse and valuable workshop program for attendees. The day of workshops (one day prior to the beginning of the scientific program) has proven to be incredibly popular, well-attended, and an indispensable part of the Annual Meeting. Members of the committee adhere to a defined process for reviewing submissions, ensuring that the review is smooth, timely, and transparent.

The Workshop Committee is also responsible for reviewing and scoring the Linda Cardozo Observership Grant applications. This is in-

credibly important as it provides an opportunity for colleagues around the world to visit a center of excellence. Applications are accepted under three categories: Trainee/Fellow/Physician-in-Training, Low Income Country and Open Category. The goal is for recipients to bring back the knowledge and experience gained, improving local urogynecology services and potentially establishing further training opportunities locally.

In addition, the Chair of the Workshop Committee actively participates in the Program Committee and contributes to the creation of the Annual Meeting program.

Through their work, the committee contributes to the advancement of urogynecology by curating educational opportunities for professionals around the world.

# IUGA Regional Symposia

IUGA Regional Symposia serve as key educational initiatives, providing tailored training in urogynecology to clinicians in specific regions around the world. These symposia are designed to address region-specific educational needs, ensuring that healthcare professionals receive relevant, high-quality education that directly benefits their clinical practice. By focusing on areas where access to urogynecological training may be limited or where there is no immediate plan for an IUGA Annual Meeting, these events help bridge knowledge gaps and support the development of urogynecology as a recognized subspecialty.

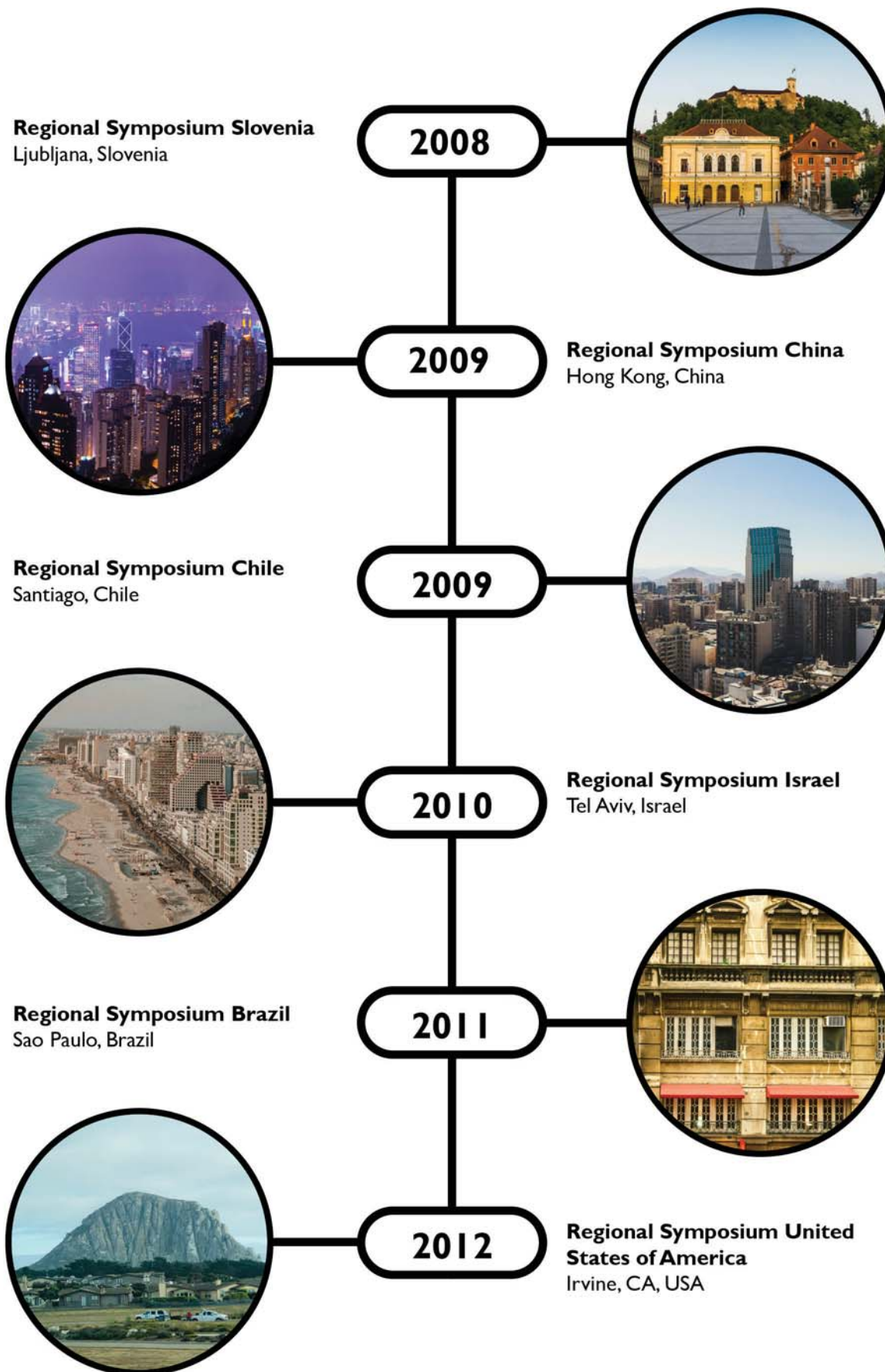
Each symposium is carefully structured to offer a combination of foundational and advanced content, incorporating lectures, panel discussions, case-based learning, and interactive workshops. Led by a mix of international and local faculty, these sessions emphasize both globally recognized best practices and the practical realities of urogynecological care in the host region. This approach ensures that attendees gain not only theoretical knowledge but also hands-on skills that can be immediately applied in their clinical settings.

Beyond education, IUGA Regional Symposia serve as a platform for networking and collaboration. By bringing together specialists, trainees, and other healthcare professionals with an interest in urogynecology, these symposia foster relationships that encourage interdisciplinary cooperation and long-term professional growth. Additionally, they play a critical role in raising awareness about urogynecology, supporting the formation of national urogynecological societies, and strengthening existing networks within the field.

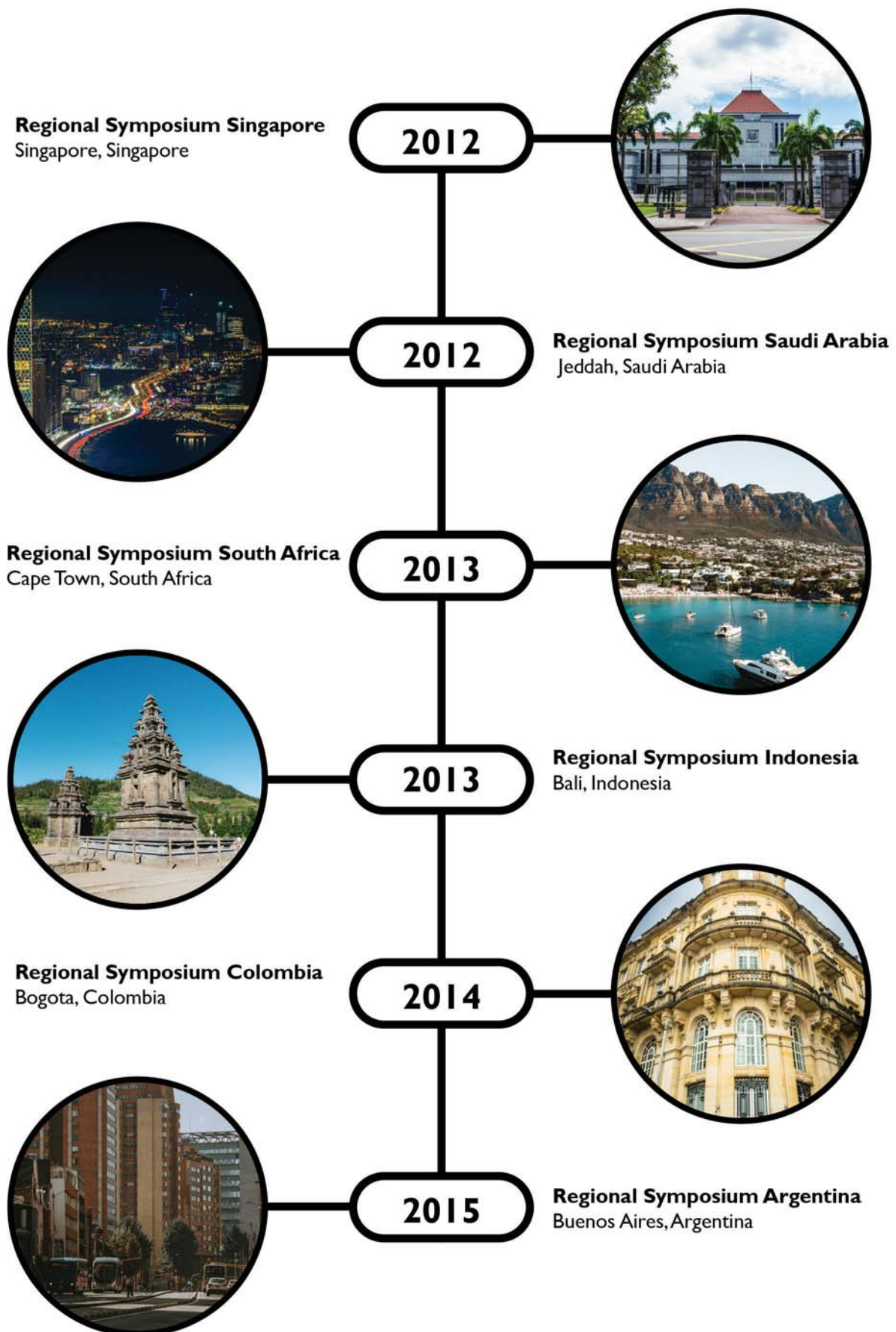
By continuing to expand the reach of Regional Symposia, IUGA reaffirms its commitment to advancing urogynecological education worldwide. These events not only equip clinicians with essential skills and knowledge but also contribute to the broader goal of improving urogynecological care for women everywhere.

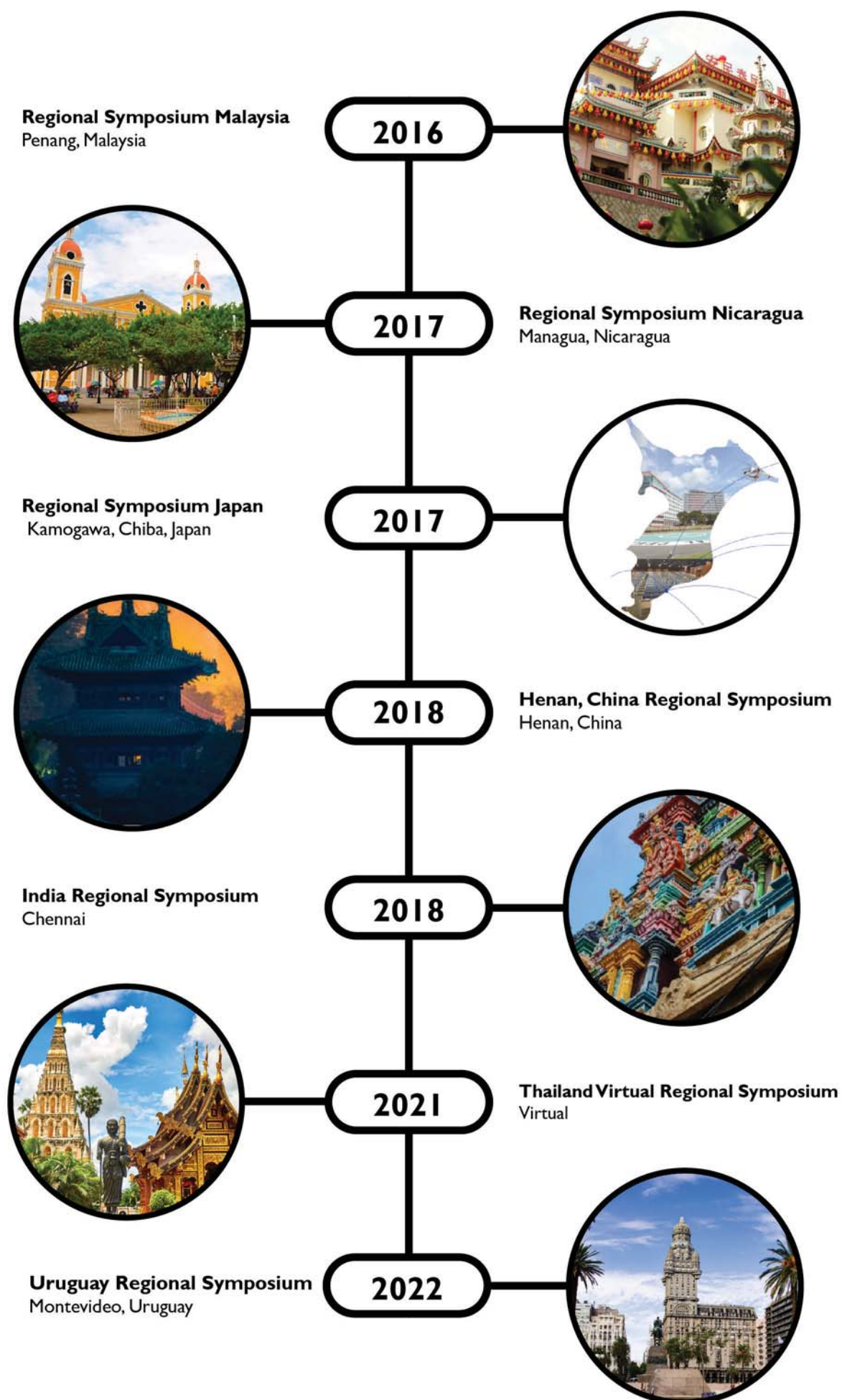












# Special Interest Groups

## Basic Science



Chair: Harry Horsley (United Kingdom)

The Basic Science SIG creates a space for members with a shared interest in mechanistic and translational research to connect and share ideas and resources with the view to fostering cross-disciplinary research ideas. In this way, the Basic Science SIG plays an important role in supporting IUGA to elucidate the physiology and the mechanics of the female pelvic floor. It helps improve the understanding of the pathogenesis of pelvic floor disorders, facilitating the development of new technologies for the assessment of the pelvic floor functionally relevant properties, and assists with the identification of novel therapeutic targets for pelvic floor disorders.

The Basic Science SIG aims to attract new members from a wide range of disciplines, including biomechanics, tissue engineering, immunology, microbiology, cellular and molecular biology, radiology, and neurophysiology. Additionally, the SIG plays a key role in developing educational webinars.



Co-Chair: Maria Bortolini (Brazil)

One specific notable success was the James Malone-Lee Christmas Lectures, organized jointly with the University College London, which provides a platform for patients, scientists, and clinicians to discuss various aspects of bladder and vaginal health.

The SIG developed the E-book *Pelvic Floor: Foundational Science and Mechanistic Insights for a Shared Disease Model*, which is available for free download on the IUGA website. This resource compiles foundational scientific knowledge to support both researchers and clinicians in advancing the field.

The SIG also hosts the Basic Science session at the IUGA Annual Meeting, which consistently draws strong attendance from members.



## Cosmetic Gynecology

The primary goal of the Cosmetic Gynecology SIG is to define, disseminate, and clarify the various surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures available in urogynecology, ensuring a thorough understanding of their indications, benefits, and appropriate patient selection. By providing clear guidelines on these procedures, they aim to support IUGA members in offering the best possible care to patients seeking treatment for pelvic floor dysfunction and related concerns.

A key focus of the group is to emphasize that, in most cases, due to the complexity of associated pathologies, urogynecologists are the most qualified professionals to perform these procedures. This includes not only surgical interventions but also non-surgical treatments, which require a specialized evaluation to determine the most suitable course of action for each patient.

In addition to clinical practice, the Cosmetic Gynecology SIG is committed to fostering scientific research and discourse within IUGA on cosmetic gynecology. This involves encouraging the presentation of scientific publications on vaginal and

vulvar reconstructive and aesthetic procedures, both within IUGA and in the broader medical community. By supporting the scientific validation of these treatments, the SIG aims to ensure that they are backed by robust evidence and are appropriate, effective, and safe.

In 2022, the SIG published the *Joint Report on Terminology for Cosmetic Gynecology*, developed collaboratively by IUGA and the American Urogynecologic Society. This document addresses the significant lack of standardized nomenclature and procedural definitions in cosmetic gynecology and the widespread use of colloquial or trademarked terms. The report provides clarity by establishing consensus definitions for cosmetic procedures involving the vulva and vagina, promoting consistency in communication, research, and patient care.

The Cosmetic Gynecology SIG is dedicated to advancing women's sexual health and function by integrating evidence-based approaches into their work, fostering collaboration among experts, and developing resources that enhance patient outcomes in this evolving field.

## Minimally Invasive and Endoscopic Surgery



Chair: Harpreet Arora (Australia)

The Minimally Invasive and Endoscopic Surgery SIG brings together members to learn and share experience and resources, and supporting the advancement of this field. Minimally invasive surgery which includes laparoscopic and robotic



Co-Chair: Rajeev Ramanah (France)

surgery is a growing field which has shown promising outcomes and this group hopes to improve quality of life for patients and reduce complications. This can be achieved by discussing clinical indications and developing educational tools.

## Neuro-Urogynecology & Urogenital Pain



*Chair: Kazibe Koyuncu (Turkey)*

The Neuro-Urogynecology & Urogenital Pain SIG is dedicated to advancing the understanding of the neurological mechanisms underlying pelvic floor dysfunction and chronic urogenital pain syndromes.

Despite significant advancements, many aspects of pelvic neurophysiology, pain modulation, and patient-specific treatment strategies remain inadequately characterized in scientific literature.

This SIG serves as a platform for multidisciplinary collaboration, uniting clinicians, researchers, and all healthcare professionals to explore new perspectives, unresolved scientific questions, and innovative approaches that go beyond current algorithmic limitations.

### Key Focus Areas

#### 1. Understanding the Neurological Basis of Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

- ♦ Examining central and peripheral nervous system pathways in bladder, bowel, and sexual function
- ♦ Exploring the role of neuroplasticity in chronic pelvic pain syndromes
- ♦ Investigating autonomic dysfunction and its impact on lower urinary tract disorders

#### 2. Clinical Challenges in Urogenital Pain Syndromes

- ♦ Why do standard diagnostic algorithms fail in some cases?
- ♦ The importance of individualized patient care and interdisciplinary collaboration
- ♦ Addressing the psychosocial aspects of chronic pelvic pain

#### 3. Innovative Approaches in Diagnosis & Treatment

- ♦ Neuroimaging and electrophysiology in pelvic floor disorders
- ♦ Emerging neuromodulation techniques for pain management
- ♦ The role of central sensitization in treatment-resistant cases

The SIG regularly hosts special talks with experts. During these discussions, renowned experts in neuro-urogynecology and urogenital pain share their clinical insights, research breakthroughs, and career experiences. These sessions provide valuable guidance on building a career in neuro-urogynecology research, navigating complex clinical cases, and exploring the future of integrated neurological and urogynecological care.



## Pelvic Floor and Obstetric Anal Sphincter Injuries



*Chair: Abdul Sultan (United Kingdom)*

The main focus of the Pelvic Floor and Obstetric Anal Sphincter Injuries SIG is on the diagnosis, management and prevention of pelvic floor and sphincter injuries during childbirth. Ultrasound imaging has identified that a considerable number of women sustain these injuries, but they are not recognized clinically during vaginal birth. A survey of the SIG members has highlighted that there is a wide variation in obstetric practice, and therefore, an international guideline is being developed to maintain consistent, evidence-based practice within the framework of available resources. Another priority of the SIG is to develop accessible educational tools to share knowledge of pelvic floor and anal sphincter trauma prevention. The IUGA PROTECT Train-the-Trainers program has created experts and champions in across the globe. The SIG promotes safe vaginal birth globally, but also recognizes the importance of counselling in respecting the woman's choice of mode of birth.

## Pelvic Floor Imaging



*Chair: Kamil Svabik (Czech Republic)*

The Pelvic Floor Imaging SIG provides a space for members to share ideas, techniques, and tips related to pelvic floor imaging, especially ultrasound. The group supports discussions on clinical and research applications and advises on IUGA's imaging-related educational content, including contributions to webinars and the Annual Meeting. It also plays a role in helping standardize how imaging is performed and interpreted.

One key initiative is the Online Pelvic Floor Imaging Course, developed by Prof. Hans Peter Dietz. This step-by-step, mentored course guides participants through 4D translabial ultrasound, covering key topics like prolapse, levator integrity, and anal sphincter imaging. It includes access to the IUGA "Cookbook", a downloadable guide with practical instructions, and the E-book *Pelvic Floor Ultrasound* to support learning.

The SIG helps make imaging education more accessible and supports members looking to build or improve their skills in this area.

## Pelvic Floor Rehabilitation



*Chair: Cristiane Carboni (Brazil)*

The goals of the Pelvic Floor Rehabilitation SIG are to promote and enhance awareness of the importance of pelvic floor physiotherapy as a non-surgical approach for pelvic floor rehabilitation and the management of pelvic floor disorders. By advancing scientific knowledge on pelvic floor physiotherapy among IUGA members, the SIG aims to encourage its use as a first-line treatment option. Additionally, the SIG seeks to increase the number of physiotherapists within IUGA to foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

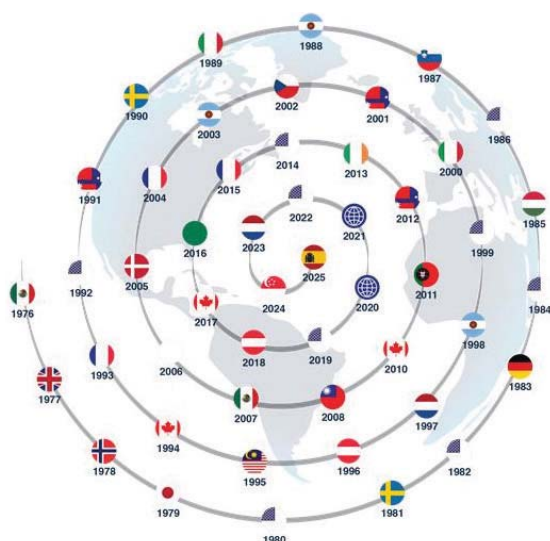
Beyond education, the SIG actively organizes symposia, workshops, and courses to provide training and knowledge translation for health-care professionals.

The SIG is committed to bridging the gap between research and clinical practice, ensuring that physiotherapists and other professionals have access to the latest evidence-based approaches in pelvic floor rehabilitation. By fostering global collaboration and discussion, the group contributes to the continuous evolution of conservative treatment strategies for pelvic floor dysfunctions.

# IUGA Annual Meetings



Since its establishment in 1976, IUGA has been dedicated to advancing the field of urogynecology through its Annual Meetings. These gatherings have become a cornerstone for healthcare professionals, researchers, and industry experts to exchange knowledge, present groundbreaking research, and foster collaborations that transcend geographical boundaries.



Each year, the IUGA Annual Meeting is hosted in a different city, reflecting the organization's commitment to global inclusivity and the dissemination of urogynecological advancements worldwide. This approach not only facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives but also allows participants to experience various cultures, enhancing the global camaraderie within the urogynecological community.

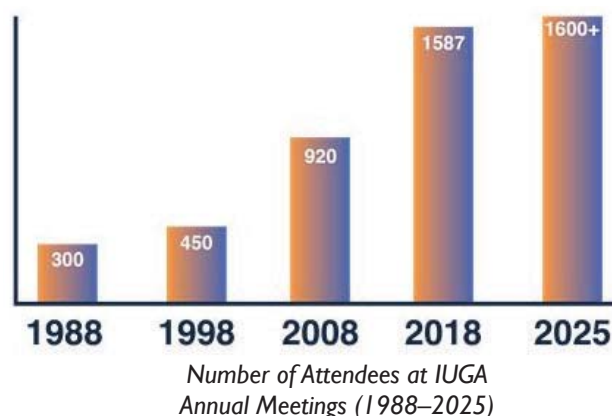
The scientific programs at IUGA's Annual Meetings are carefully curated to reflect the latest developments and challenges in urogynecology.

Attendees benefit from a well-rounded agenda that includes keynote lectures from global experts, hands-on workshops, panel discussions, and abstract presentations covering everything from surgical innovations to advances in diagnostics and patient care.

The Program Committee, guided by the IUGA Secretary and supported by a local organizing committee (LOC), is responsible for designing the overall meeting program. The Scientific Committee reviews and scores all submitted abstracts, organizes them into appropriate sessions, and ensures the scientific quality and relevance of the content presented. Together, these committees ensure that each Annual Meeting provides an engaging and up-to-date learning experience for all participants.

In addition to the scientific sessions, the Annual Meetings provide ample opportunities for networking and professional development. Social events, mentorship programs, and collaborative forums are integral components of the meetings, fostering relationships that often lead to significant contributions to the field.

Over the years, the IUGA Annual Meetings have been instrumental in setting standards, influencing clinical practices, and inspiring research that shapes the future of urogynecology. As we celebrate 50 years of IUGA, we reflect on the profound impact these gatherings have had on improving women's health globally and look forward to continuing this legacy in the years to come.

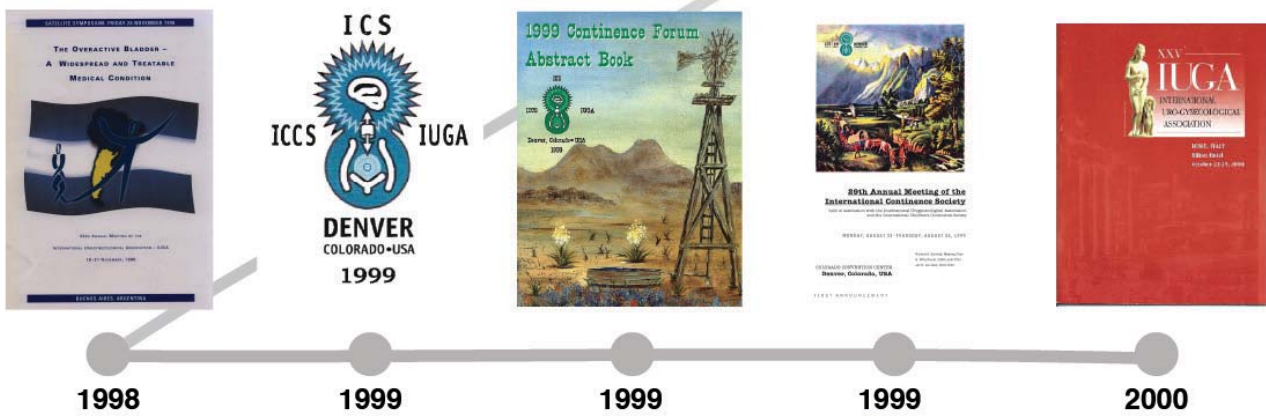
















2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012



2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018



2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024

# Obituaries

## Ulf Ulmsten (1938 – 2004)

Professor Ulf I. Ulmsten died on March 4th, 2004, at the age of 66 years. Ulf was educated at the University of Lund, Sweden. Following 3 years in the Department of Pathology at the University of Lund, he became a Post-Doctorate Fellow in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, in 1968. From 1971 to 1978 he was an Assistant and Associate Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Malmö General Hospital University of Lund. From 1980 to 1985 he was Professor and Chairman at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Århus University Denmark and then at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, before going to Uppsala University Hospital, Uppsala, where he was Professor and Chairman until his retirement in 2003. Ulf served on many Government and Association Committees and Boards. To name a few, he was President of the Nordic Fertility Association from 1981 to 1983, the Scandinavian Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists from 1988 and 1990, Chairman of the Nordic Collegium of Professors of Obstetrics and Gynaecology from 1991 and of the Committee of Reproductive Research, Swedish Medical Research Council. He was a strong supporter of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), serving as a member of the FIGO and WHO Committee for Safe Motherhood and represented IUGA on various other committees. Ulf became the personnel physician to the Queen of Sweden in 1989 and in 1997 advisor to the Swedish Council on Technology Assessment in Health Care.

Over his academic career Ulf authored approximately 500 scientific articles and reviews involving experimental and clinical studies in many areas of obstetrics and gynaecology, including the endocrine influence of bioactive regulators

on non-pregnant and pregnant uterine function. However, it will be his work in the area of urogynaecology and pelvic floor diseases that will be best remembered by the readership of this journal. His collaboration with Asmussen increased our knowledge on urethral function and improved our assessment of urinary incontinence. Ulf was always open to new ideas and quick to see their potential. With others Ulf investigated the importance of collagen disorders, estrogens and urogenital aging in the pathogenesis of stress incontinence. His work with Petros led to the development of minimally invasive slings, including the Tension free vaginal tape (TVT), making the treatment of stress incontinence a less invasive and safer procedure for women. He had great personal qualities of modesty and integrity. On Ulf's instigation, long-term and prospective randomised studies were undertaken to demonstrate the effectiveness and safety of this new procedure. As a safeguard to patients' safety worldwide, Ulf insisted that there must be an appropriate training program and certification before clinicians could access this new procedure.

Ulf was a charter member of the International urogynaecology Association (IUGA) and along with the founders, Axel Ingelman-Sundberg (Sweden) and Jack Robertson (USA), he attended the inaugural meeting held in Mexico City in 1976 at the time of the FIGO World Congress. Professor Ingelman-Sundberg was a mentor of Ulf's and stimulated his interest in urogynaecology and pelvic surgery in Ulf's early years at the Karolinska Institute. Axel and Jack were the first Presidents of IUGA between 1976 and 1986 but Ulf made a major contribution, acting as Secretary/Treasurer to the Association in those early years. Ulf had served on many committees for IUGA since then and was the Terminology and





Standardisation Committee Chair at the time of his death. He was also Chairman of the Organising Committee of the 1990 Annual IUGA Scientific Meeting in Stockholm and the Chairman's dinner, which Ulf hosted in his department at Uppsala, will be well remembered by many of us.

Perhaps it would be best to leave the last words to one of IUGA's founding fathers, Jack Robertson, who recalls: "meeting Ulf as a young doctor in Sweden, when visiting Axel Ingelman-Sundberg, and being immediately impressed by him. Since then he has become known worldwide for his innovative work and his operative approach to incontinence, which is a major advance in this complex field. He will be missed by his many

friends throughout the world." Yes Jack, he will be.

On behalf of all IUGA members I would like to send our condolences to his wife, Miria and children, Erik, Lisen and David. I would like to acknowledge that many members of IUGA contributed to this tribute to Ulf Ulmsten, and special thanks to Axel Ingelman-Sundberg and Jack Robertson.

**Peter L. Dwyer**

Past President of IUGA

## Axel Ingelman-Sundberg (1910-2009)

On 12 October 2009, Axel Ingelman-Sundberg passed away after a minor stroke and pneumonia. He was in his 98th year. He leaves behind 6 children and 15 grandchildren.

In 1976, at the Federation International of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) meeting at Mexico City, Axel and his colleague and friend, Jack Robertson (USA), assembled nine international colleagues:

Eckhard Petri (Germany), Oscar Contreras Ortiz (Argentina), Stuart Stanton (United Kingdom), Donald Ostergard (USA), David Warrel (United Kingdom), Aboo Hassan Abbo (Sudan), Ulf Ulmsten (Sweden), Bozo Kralj (Slovenia), and Wolfgang Fischer (Germany) to found the International Urogynecological Association (IUGA).

IUGA's mission was defined as: "A non-profit international association, dedicated to the advancement of urogynecological knowledge around the world through education and the promotion of basic and clinical research on disorders of the female pelvic floor." Axel was elected as the first president.

Axel was born on 22 December 1910 in Uppsala, Sweden. His father was a clergyman, and his mother, a well-trained doctor. Axel, early on, decided to study medicine and worked in different departments of Uppsala University as an assistant while studying medicine full-time. In 1939, he was ordered to join the army in the war between Finland and Russia, and was transferred to the far north where Sweden borders on Finland. Here, he organized a fully equipped military hospital; he was always a good organizer.

In 1947, he married Mirjam Furuhielm, MD, a gynecologist who was born in Helsingfors and specialized in gynecological endocrinology. A brilliant lady, she later became an honorary professor. She already had two children, and she and Axel started a large family. She died in May 2003.

Among the six children, three are professors in medicine, one is a pathologist, and one daughter is a PhD in marine archeology, history, and she is also a well-known journalist and writer of historical novels.

Axel was for many years a leading scientist and medical educator as well as a hard-working clinician. His paper, "Intravesical nerve resection for detrusor dyssynergia" (*Acta Obstet Gyneacol Scand* 38:487, 1959) described partial denervation of the bladder as a new operation for the treatment of urge incontinence.

Axel first described the Ingelman-Sundberg technique of repair for stress urinary incontinence using the pubococcygeus muscle. This procedure laid the groundwork for Ulf Ulmsten's (a protégé

of Axel's) pioneering work on tension-free vaginal tape (TVT), which, along with other minimally invasive mid-urethral slings (MIS) has revolutionized the treatment of stress urinary incontinence in women.

Claes Wirsén, and Lennart Nillson (who was the photographer), published *A Child is Born* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1966; New York: Dell Publishing, 1969) a textbook that illustrated the nature of life

before birth in unprecedented photographs and which served as a practical guide for the expectant mother.

From 1949 to 1979, Axel served as Professor and Head, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Sabbatsberg Sjukhus, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden. I had the privilege of working with Axel in the early part of 1975 when I was a McLaughlin Fellow in the burgeoning new field of urogynecology. By that time, Axel was one of the senior gynecologic surgeons in all of Scandinavia. He had become the teacher's teacher, the surgeon's surgeon, and the consultant's consultant.



When Axel made his “professor’s rounds,” his entire department (attending staff, fellows, residents, students, nurses, etc.) were part of his entourage, everyone eager to learn from the master clinician.

For the younger members of IUGA who may not have known Axel personally, you will recall the elderly red-haired gentleman in a jacket and bowtie, who sat in the front row of each scientific session at all the annual clinical meetings

(ACM) and whose questions and comments were so erudite and meaningful.

Perhaps the greatest tribute IUGA can pay to Axel is to continue to move forward in the direction the society has taken in becoming the strongest international force in helping women with pelvic floor disorders.

**Harold P. Drutz**

Past President of IUGA



XV Argentine Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
1976 – Rosario, Argentina

This meeting took place some days before IUGA foundation

## Jack Robertson (1917-2015)

On April 1, 2015 IUGA and the wider medical community lost a great man, Jack Robertson. Jack was a founding father of IUGA, outstanding innovator, teacher, surgeon and humanitarian. His contributions allowed us to better understand female lower urinary tract function. He was role model, mentor and friend to many IUGA members. He will be greatly missed. Thanks for everything you did for us, Jack!

As a tribute to Jack, we have included his thoughts following a Lifetime Achievement Award presented by AUGS. IUGA had presented Jack with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Paris in 2004.

At their annual meeting, the American Urogynecological Society honored me with the Jack Robertson Lifetime Achievement Award, which really means urogynecology has come a long way. It got me reminiscing. I am almost 94. I was born in Boise, Idaho. I worked summers at Sun Valley, Idaho, the famous ski resort. When I was in high school, I went to the opening gala as a date of a girl whose prominent family was invited, as were movie stars and moguls. We young people were seated at a large round table. They bet me \$25 to ask the glamorous Madeleine Carroll for a dance. Twenty-five dollars then was like \$400 now. She saw a tall, blond youth, slithered up, and talked the whole time about her “no-count” husband who was a Count. Pretty much, I was speechless.

One summer in college, I was a hay pitcher at Sun Valley. Early evenings, the workers would gather outside a corner of the Lodge for a beer. Ernest Hemingway was at the Lodge writing a book. He loved to hunt and fish. His favorite guide was known as Taylor “Beartracks” Williams. Beartracks came to our gathering one evening carrying a present for me. Hemingway had given him the manuscript of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He said, “Doc, you are working your way through school to become a doctor. I can hardly read. I want you to have this.” It took me a lot of convincing to make him see this was too valuable a gift for me to accept and that he needed to keep it for himself and his family.

Many years later, I attended a medical meeting at Sun Valley as an invited speaker. Also on the faculty was my mentor and Chief of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, Dr. Conrad Collins. As we sat on the terrace watching the famous ski slope, which has produced so many world class skiers, the loudspeaker blared, “We are dedicating this show to the hay pitcher who became a doctor, Dr. Jack Robertson.” Under Dr. Collins, my residency had included the female urinary tract, which was my special interest. He insisted we qualify to join the American Board of Surgery. Charity Hospital had a plethora of surgical opportunities. We did the first vaginal hysterectomies in the USA. When I went into private practice, I was the most popular assistant surgeon in town, teaching my cohorts our procedure. I later became a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.



***Jack Robertson (center), with his younger self on the screen behind, accepting a Lifetime Achievement Award in Maxim's Restaurant, Paris, on the occasion of the 2004 IUGA Annual Scientific Meeting. Jack's wife Janice is receiving the award with him. Jack says, "She has been called 'the mother of urogynecology.' Without her help, I could not have pioneered." The award was presented by Peter Dwyer, then IUGA President. Harold Drutz can be seen behind Jack Robertson.***

Many years later, I attended a medical meeting at Sun Valley as an invited speaker. Also on the



faculty was my mentor and Chief of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, Dr. Conrad Collins. As we sat on the terrace watching the famous ski slope, which has produced so many world class skiers, the loudspeaker blared, "We are dedicating this show to the hay pitcher who became a doctor, Dr. Jack Robertson." Under Dr. Collins, my residency had included the female urinary tract, which was my special interest. He insisted we qualify to join the American Board of Surgery. Charity Hospital had a plethora of surgical opportunities. We did the first vaginal hysterectomies in the USA. When I went into private practice, I was the most popular assistant surgeon in town, teaching my cohorts our procedure. I later became a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

On vacations in Boise, I worked as a bartender in a local hotel. This was the best pre-psychology course I could have taken. Another college summer, I was appointed to run the bowling alley. My roommate and good friend Martin Arrouge (Marty), an Austrian, was head ski instructor. I taught Norma Shearer how to bowl, and she later married Marty. I gave pointers to Bing Crosby and sons. Another guest, Cary Grant, was a very sad person after he mistakenly shot a bald eagle. All these people plus many just plain folks encouraged me on my way. Another summer, I worked as an extra on the movie "Northwest Passage," with Spencer Tracy. The great American Indian athlete, Jim Thorpe, was in the cast, and I learned some of my best lessons in life from him. In Washington, D.C., attending medical school, I ran a remote elevator in the Capitol building. The senators called me "doc" and made sure I had time to study and plenty to eat.

In 1968, I attended the first joint meeting of the German Surgical Society and the American College of Surgeons in Munich, Germany. There I met Karl Storz, the master medical instrument maker, who had just acquired the breakthrough fiberoptic technology invented by Professor Harold H. Hopkins. I told him I wanted him to make a 4-mm-diameter female urethroscope, through which I could introduce carbon dioxide. At that

time, there were no female gynecological instruments. All were originally designed for males. Mr. Storz was immediately enthusiastic. I carried home the first Storz laparoscope, which I taught my comrades to use, but which I made do until I received the Robertson female urethroscope from Mr. Storz. This endoscopy telescope fits into an airtight handle, through which the CO<sub>2</sub> is insufflated from the CO<sub>2</sub> endoscopy monitor, which allowed urethral and bladder pressure studies to be accomplished during endoscopy with a flow rate variable from 30 to 120 cc/min. The endoscopy monitor used an XY recorder to chart the pressure and the volume of gas inserted and correlated these with the sensations experienced by the patient during bladder filling.

From the time as a teenager I first aspired to be a doctor, people went out of their way to help me. Local surgeons invited me to audit surgeries. Everywhere I went through my formative years, I was helped along because people knew I wanted to be a doctor. This is a beautiful thing we have in our confraternity, and I want to celebrate it now.

## **A Trainee's Viewpoint (Harold Drutz)**

As part of my McLaughlin Fellowship program, I started a 6-month fellowship with Jack Robertson at LAC-USC Medical Centre in July of 1975. I had already completed training in Europe (with Axel Ingelman-Sundberg in Stockholm, Peter Donker in The Netherlands, Richard Turner Warwick in the United Kingdom, Eric Glen in Scotland, and Africa (with Reginald and Catherine Hamlin in Ethiopia). Two of my mentors, Goran Ehnroing and Ted Morgan in Toronto, suggested that I spend time with Jack, who had pioneered the development of the 0 degree female cystourethroscope. Jack told me that he worked at LAC-USC, but he did not tell me that he only came down once a week and that his private practice was in Santa Inez. So there I was, left to run a newly established urodynamics and cystoscopy clinic by myself, and to teach the core residents. When Jack came down, his teaching was sensible, experienced, and we treated ma-

ny complicated cases (e.g., recurrent fistulas in women sent from Mexico). At that time Jack had a relationship with Browne Corporation, and he was organizing weekend courses in “urogynecology”. Rapidly, he recruited me as his teaching assistant, and the “road show” introduced many surgeons to the burgeoning field of urogynecology. Jack’s interpersonal skills are his greatest asset. He could bring urologists and gynecologists to the table in a collegial environment in an era when the “politics of the pelvis” was territorial and treated the “pelvis of hold poles, and not the whole pelvis”. It was these “people skills” that enabled Jack to work together with Axel to create the International Urogynecological Association (IUGA), and to set up the GUS (Gyneco-

logic Urology Society) – today known as AUGS (American Urogynecologic Society). Throughout his professional career, Jack has been aided by his better half, Janice (Jan) Robertson, who has been his artist, meeting co-coordinator, and far more than just “right-hand man”. This is the reason she was bestowed the title of “Mother of Urogynecology” at the IUGA meeting in Toronto in 1994. It has been an honor for me to have been, and continue to be, mentored by Jack, who remains truly a pioneer in this field.

**Harold P. Drutz**

Past President of IUGA

## Oscar Contreras-Ortiz (1936 – 2017)

Oscar Contreras-Ortiz was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He received his medical and gynecological training at the University of Buenos Aires and the Hospital “Jose de San Martin”. He became Professor at this University in 1979 and with a special interest in urogynecology. Apart from practicing as a urogynecologist and teaching, he was author of 237 scientific publications in Argentinean and international journals next to numerous national and international scientific presentations.

Oscar was a principal visionary behind the formation of IUGA and hence a founding father at the first meeting in Mexico in 1976. Ever since he played an important role in the development of our society. He was chairman of many IUGA committees. He was member of the IUGA Executive Board and President of IUGA from 1996 to 1998.

In 1989, 1998 and 2003 he organized the IUGA Annual Scientific Meetings in Argentina. These were important events not only for its high scientific quality, but also due to Oscar's more or less mandatory, nevertheless lovely, social programs and showing how proud he was on his Argentina.

In 1986, together with Professor Ostergard, he founded the International Urogynecology Journal and Pelvic Floor Disorders, the premier journal in our profession. Both were

the first editors of the Journal. In 2005 Oscar generously donated his share of the ownership of the Journal to IUGA.

In 2006 Oscar was awarded for his major contributions with the IUGA Lifetime Achievement Award followed by his nominating as the first Honorary Member of IUGA.

Professor Contreras-Ortiz promoted urogynecology by lecturing and teaching not only in Argentina, but also in South America, the United States and the rest of the world. He was Honorary Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and ran the ACOG District office and Education Center in Buenos Aires. Oscar was a longstanding member of FIGO and representing Latin American urogynecology within the FIGO Board.

Oscar's strength was apart from an impressive medical and scientific career, his amiable personality with a continuous interest in you and your family as

friends. A cosmopolitan with the Latin-American charm. An inspiring person and a joy to speak with for every second of the conversation.

**Harry A.M. Vervest**  
Past President of IUGA



## Eckhard Petri (1951-2019)

Eckhard Petri was a well-known and highly respected German gynecologic surgeon whose expertise extended beyond Urogynecologic surgery – he was also an oncologic and breast surgeon. Eckhard was Chief, Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Academic Teaching Hospital, University of Rostock, in Schwerin.

He was one of the Founding Fathers of IUGA at the 1976 Mexico City FIGO meeting. Involved in many facets of IUGA, he served as Secretary-Treasurer from 1982-1990, and President from 1990-1992. He chaired the 1983 Annual Meeting in Mainz, Germany, and co-chaired the 1985 Annual Meeting in Budapest, Hungary. He served on the Editorial Board of the International Urogynecology Journal for numerous years.

In 2011, Dr. Petri was awarded IUGA's highest honor – the IUGA Lifetime Achievement

Award – for his dedication and contributions to both IUGA and the field of urogynecology.

His legacy lives through his many publications, books, contributions to various German medical societies and his dedication to training fellows from around the world (Argentina, Mexico, Korea, India, Nepal, Jordan, Syria and many European countries). He passed 21 Sept 2019 in Schwerin and was buried at sea. The scope of his influence can be witnessed as being one of the few Urogynecologists to have his own Wikipedia page.



He is dearly missed.

**G. Willy Davila**

Past President of IUGA



## Božo Kralj (1932–2020)

Dr. Božo Kralj contributed to the exceptional development of gynecology in Slovenia and contributed to the international recognition and stature of the Slovenian contributions to the profession.

He worked for the Ljubljana University Medical Center (UMC) Gynecology and Obstetrics Division, where he remained until his retirement in 1998. From 1992 to 1998 he served as the medical director of the UMC Gynecology and Obstetrics Division, and was named a full professor of gynecology and obstetrics at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Medicine.

From 1969 onwards, he developed the new interdisciplinary field of urogynecology, implemented functional electrical stimulation for the conservative treatment of urinary incontinence, and introduced urodynamic testing in clinical practice in many hospitals throughout Slovenia.

His awareness of the extent of urinary incontinence problems among women led him to become one of 11 founding members of the International Urogynecology Association in 1976, later serving as Vice President from 1985 to 1988 and President from 1988 to 1990. In 1987, he chaired the IUGA's 12th Annual Meeting, held in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

He was the president of the Slovenian Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians (1994–2005), president of the Italian Urogynecology Association (1989–1991), a member of FIGO sci-

entific board (1997–2000) and also its executive board (2003–2009), a member of the executive board of the EAGO, and an honorary member of the Gynecology Associations of Italy, Slovakia and North Macedonia, and a honorary member of Academy of Medical Sciences of Serbian Medical Society, member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. After retiring, he served as the dean of the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Health Sciences and as dean of the University of Novo Mesto Faculty of Health Sciences up until 2012.

For his life's work and contribution to the international development of urogynecology he received the IUGA Lifetime Achievement Award, and for his contributions to developing interna-

tional gynecology and obstetrics he was awarded the *Medaglia d'oro* (Gold Medal) of the Italian Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians, both in 2009. He was awarded the Yugoslav Order of Merit with Silver Rays in 1974, the City of Ljubljana Plaque in 1998, and the University of Ljubljana Gold Plaque in 2002.

*Ego plus quam feci, facere non possum*, said Cicero: "I can do no more than I have done". You accomplished a great deal and we are thankful for all of your work.

### Adolf Lukanović

President of Slovenian Society of Urogynecology



# Acknowledgements



Mark Vierhout (The Netherlands)

IUGA 50 years!!

Who would have predicted that a small group of like-minded gynecologists with an interest in urogynecology—back when it didn't even have that name yet—would grow into a worldwide professional organization with members from various disciplines across literally all parts of the world? Over the past 50 years, IUGA has set the standard in all aspects of diagnostics, organization, education, and therapy within urogynecology. The organization is solid, financially healthy, and expertly managed by a professional office. Yet, the friendly and collegial spirit of the early years remains, making IUGA such a special organization!

This book, published in honor of IUGA's 50th anniversary, aims to provide an overview of all current activities while also reflecting on 50 successful years. I would like to sincerely thank all the authors for their contributions—this book truly belongs to and is for the members!

A special word of thanks goes to the IUGA office; they have done the real hard work in putting this book together. In particular, I would like to extend my gratitude to Corie Pel, Silvia de Maglie, Virag Freyer, and Katherine Thompson.

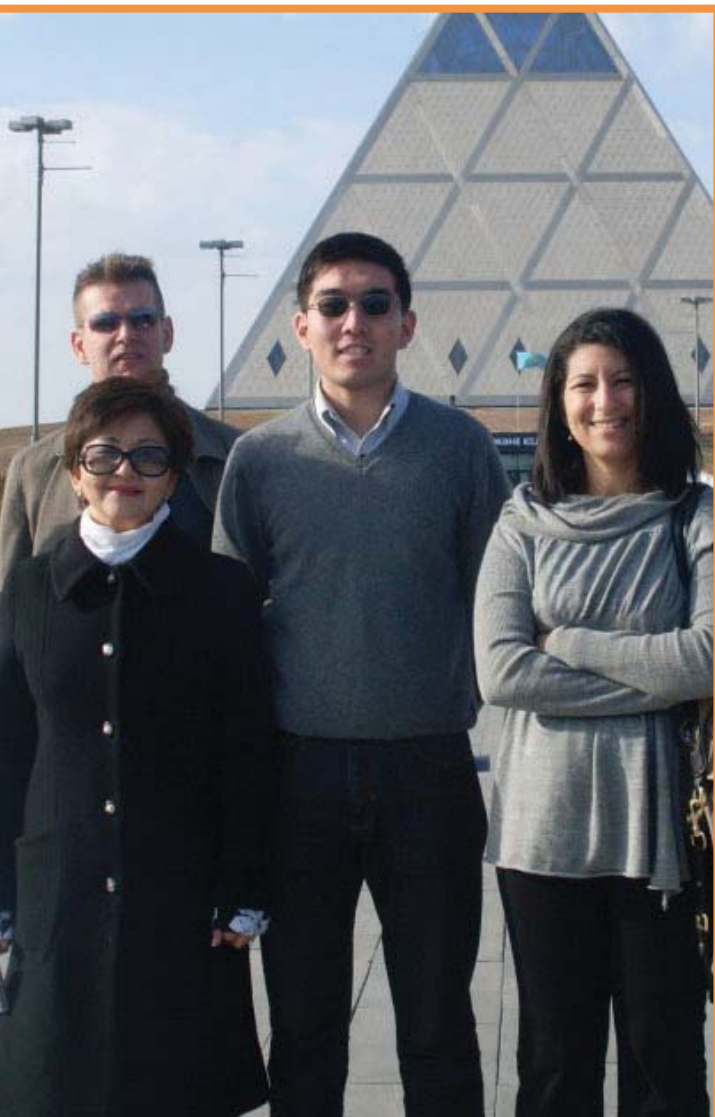
I hope you read this book with interest, and as a gynecologist with a passion for history, I would like to close with the words of Aristotle:

*"Doubt is the source of all wisdom."*

Let us all continue to doubt.

**Mark Vierhout,**  
Chairman IUGA History Committee





















# IUGA 50

**For five decades, the International Urogynecological Association has united a global network of professionals dedicated to improving the lives of women affected by pelvic floor disorders. With members from all around the globe, IUGA leads the way in advancing knowledge, fostering collaboration, and shaping the future of urogynecology.**

**At the heart of this organization lies a bold vision:**

**To achieve pelvic floor health for all women.**

**Driven by this purpose, IUGA's mission is clear:**

**To advance education and research, provide expert guidance, and increase global awareness about pelvic floor dysfunction.**

**Whether you're a clinician, researcher, or advocate, this book offers a look into the people, progress, and passion behind IUGA's work - And the global impact we continue to achieve together.**