

History of the International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy

Compiled by Sarah Ewald, IFSHT President-Elect (2010 – 2013)

The International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy (IFSHT) was founded in 1987 for the purpose of coordinating activities of the various national societies for hand therapy and increasing and enhancing the exchange of knowledge of hand therapy.

Thanks to an initial invitation from Dr Alfred Swanson on behalf of the IFSSH, the participation of therapists at the IFSSH Congresses in the Netherlands in 1980, USA in 1983, and Japan in 1986 helped to lay the groundwork for the founding of IFSHT.

It was the vision and inspiration of Evelyn Mackin that led the way towards the creation of IFSHT. In

December 1986, a group of therapists led by Mackin met during the joint meeting of the French Hand Surgery and Hand Therapy Societies in Paris, France. Encouraged by Doctors Raoul Tubiana (France), Yves Allieu (France) and Georgio Brunelli (Italy), the IFSHT was formed, officially registered as a Federation in Montpellier on 10th December 1987. Initial member societies were Belgium, France, Great Britain and USA.

Credit for the major portion of essential groundwork must be given to the first generation of hand therapists: Evelyn Mackin, Judy Colditz, Elaine Fess, Rosalyn Evans, and Judy Bell-Krotoski from the USA; Victoria Frampton from Great Britain, Paul van Lede and Jacques Otthiers from Belgium; Jean-Claude Rouzaud, Philippe Chamagne, and Dominique Thomas from France and Wim Brandsma from the Netherlands.

The first IFSHT Congress was held in Tel-Aviv, Israel in 1989. Ten country delegates from Australia, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, Israel, New

Zealand, Poland, South Africa, and USA formed the council. Taiwan and the Netherlands attended as observers. Officers elected were Evelyn Mackin, President (USA); Jean-Claude Rouzaud, Secretary General (France); Corrienne van Velze, Historian (South Africa).

IFSHT continued meeting triennially: in Paris, France in 1992; Helsinki, Finland in 1995; Vancouver, Canada in 1998; Istanbul, Turkey in 2001; Edinburgh, Scotland in 2004; Sydney, Australia in 2007, and Orlando, Florida, USA in 2010. As often as possible, IFSHT meets at the same time and in the same location as IFSSH. In 2013 IFSHT and IFSSH will meet together in New Delhi, India. IFSHT continues to enjoy the co-operation and support of IFSSH.

To date there have been eight Presidents of IFSHT from six different countries:

- Evelyn Mackin (USA) 1987-1992 Tel Aviv, Israel
- Jean-Claude Rouzaud (France) 1992-1995 France
- Victoria Frampton (United





Picture of Presidents of IFSHT: Back row; (L) to (R): Maggi Persson (Sweden) 2004-2007; Annette Leveridge (UK) 2001-2004; Lynne Feehan (Canada) 2010-2013; Judy Colditz (USA) 2007-2010; Corrienne van Velze, (South Africa) 1998-2001; Front row; (L) to (R): Victoria Frampton (UK) 1995-1998, Evelyn Mackin (US) 1987-1992, and Jean Claude Rouzaud (France) 1992-1995.

- Kingdom) 1995-1998 Vancouver
- Corrienne van Velze (South Africa) 1998-2001 Istanbul
- Annette Leveridge (United Kingdom) 2001-2004 Edinburgh
- Margareta Persson (Sweden) 2004-2007 Sydney
- Judy Colditz (USA) 2007-2010 Orlando
- Lynne Feehan (Canada) 2010-2013 New Delhi

Organisational structure

In 2006 the official registration of IFSHT was moved to Winterthur, Switzerland and a Swiss bank account established for the Federation. Membership has continued to increase. Rather than waiting until each Triennial Delegates' Council Meeting to accept new member societies, IFSHT now is able to accept electronic voting for approval of membership and other matters

between the triennial congress times.

Currently the IFSHT has 31 full member countries, five corresponding members and 3 commercial members. Full members are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland,

Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Corresponding members are Latvia, Jordan, Bahrain, Barbados and Mexico.

In 2007 a new official IFSHT logo was chosen for IFSHT and is now synonymous with IFSHT. Prior to 2007, the IFSHT Newsletter was printed annually in paper form and distributed to member country delegates. Currently the IFSHT Update, a one-page newsletter is published electronically four times a year and distributed to all member societies as well as published in the US-based Journal of Hand Therapy and the UK-based Hand Therapy.

In 2008 the IFSHT Mission Statement was created: "Providing global networking and educational opportunities to develop and enhance the practice of hand therapy". This statement guides the IFSHT Executive Committee and delegates in their decision making.

The IFSHT is a totally voluntary organisation and currently does not maintain a central office. Communication within the Executive Committee is facilitated by electronic correspondence and electronic telephone conference calls. Funds for the activities supported by IFSHT come from annual membership fees, direct donations, and a triennial silent auction. The Triennial IFSHT Silent Auction helps to raise funds for therapists to attend the next IFSHT Triennial Congress. Goods from all over the hand therapy world are donated for this fun event.

The IFSHT membership fee has intentionally been kept reasonable at \$50.00 (US) per annum plus \$1.00

"In addition to our Triennial Congresses, IFSHT continues to seek ways in which we can provide networking and educational opportunities to further the practice of Hand Therapy throughout the world"

(US) per member of the member organisation, so even the smallest society can afford to participate.

IFSHT activities

The development of the IFSHT website was begun in 2001, and is updated regularly. The website serves as an information and communication platform between member countries of the IFSHT as well as for the general public. (www.ifsht.org)

The IFSHT has developed sponsorship opportunities for therapists to attend international meetings and has supported projects to teach therapists about hand therapy. IFSHT has supported volunteer teaching projects in Moldova, Peru, and Armenia. The Federation has also helped make connections for projects and encourages therapists to share their

expertise. Past President Maggi Persson, has travelled to Kenya and Ethiopia to provide hand therapy courses to local therapists and is one of many dedicated, highly skilled hand therapists who travels the world sharing skills and knowledge with other therapists wishing to develop their hand therapy skills. IFSHT also has a visiting therapist programme that allows therapists to contact hand therapists in other countries and arrange clinical visits. This cultural and educational exchange was initially formulated in 1998. IFSHT also assists with locating hand therapists for patients who are travelling outside their home country.

The IFSHT Education Committee maintains a list of International Hand Therapy Educators as well as a list of educational and clinical training programmes in a variety of countries.

In 2009 IFSHT received a donation of hand dynamometers and has developed a dynamometer donation programme. To date approximately 81 instruments have been donated to hand therapy clinics around the world in locations such as Honduras, Thailand, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ecuador and Bhutan to name a few.

In addition to our Triennial Congresses, IFSHT continues to seek ways in which we can provide networking and educational opportunities to further the practice of Hand Therapy throughout the world.

For more information please visit www.ifsht.org