

Foundation for History of Physiotherapy **Physiotherapy in perspective, 50 years past - present.**



Hospital physiotherapy

Text: Huub Vossen PT, MMT, Dr. Anthony de Wijer.

'A remedial gymnast masseur in every hospital! A social demand!'

With this call, remedial gymnast J. Eijkman from Zeist in 1934 in the Dutch magazine for Remedial Gymnastics and Massage a frantic attempt to bring the Rehabilitative Gymnastics and massage into hospitals in the Netherlands¹. Eijkman wanted to denounce the lack of expert therapy by remedial gymnastics masseurs in hospitals and described some

examples from a hospital. Eijkman found, among other things, that patients were given bed rest for five months with an inflamed joint, that with a single fracture, after 14 weeks of nursing, the patient was still unable to walk and that contractures were 'treated' by nurses.



Traction in hospital early 1930s.

All ailments for which you

Today you don't have to spend a day in a hospital. This statement seemed more like a cry for help than a call.

Development of hospital physiotherapy.

In the early 1930s, hospital physiotherapy was cautiously introduced for the first time, although at that time the Netherlands only knew the 'heilgymnast masseur', who received his legal recognition in 1942. They were actually the hospital physiotherapists 'avant la lettre'.

Curiously enough, at that time, healing gymnastics was already used in Germany for a long time (Krankengymnastik) in hospitals.

Eijkman noted that we were lagging behind in the Netherlands. Healing gymnastics already became something in the 1930s better known in hospitals and the role and position of the remedial gymnast in relation to doctors is written.

In 1939, heilgymnast Nuyten, chairman of the Society of Heilgymnasts and Masseurs and who works in a hospital, describes how he had to get used to the hierarchy and humbled himself towards the doctors because of the doctors' unfamiliarity with the medical gymnastics². Nuyten also found a pleasant working atmosphere and he found his work as a remedial gymnastics highly valued.

What pioneering work these physiotherapists have done 'avant la lettre'!



Healing gymnastics on the rise at the end of the 1930s

Where are we now with the hospital physiotherapy?

Fortunately, we can now rely on guidelines and standards of care for hospital physiotherapists and there are networks with physiotherapist specialists for conditions in the clinical setting. The current chairman of the KNGF no longer needs to place a call for more attention to hospital physiotherapy. But can we sit back?

It is still claimed by physiotherapists that doctors know too little about the developments in the field of physiotherapy. *L'histoire se repète?*

There are many reasons for this but let's look at ourselves first. Medical specialists were widely represented as teachers in the 1970s and 1980s at the Academy of Physiotherapy to physiotherapy students education in medical subjects.

This is still common in the neighboring countries of Belgium and Germany. In the Netherlands, the doctor currently has no role or only a limited role in the current physiotherapy courses as a result of which the natural connection between the medical and paramedical sector has disappeared. It is logical that doctors are less or no longer aware of physiotherapy. The old guard, on the other hand, was guided by neurologists, among others, with the book 'Compendium Neurologie van Schadé'. they can do it

to dream. Why do students (or the physiotherapy course) no longer need these teachers? After all, on HBO, most doctors disappeared with a silent drum!

However, we are seeing a change. A university course in physiotherapy has been started three years ago, where the neurologist, for example, teaches the profession of neurology again. Fortunately, the medical specialist teachers return here together with specialist teachers from physiotherapy, so that a more complementary and in-depth picture is created.

What can we learn from history?

Our pioneers have fought hard to promote hospital physiotherapy, first and foremost among doctors, as evidenced by contributions in the Dutch magazine for Heilgymnastics and Massage^{1,2}.

Anatomy, physiology, orthopedics and neurology, etc. are not old-fashioned subjects (as is often referred to) but classic subjects that are indispensable for a good understanding and for the correct to obtain and maintain collaboration with physicians in hospitals. The question must be asked, in the perspective of the past, whether physiotherapy can afford to

teach courses yourself and whether the current hospital physiotherapy would benefit from this?

References

1. JC Eijkman. 'A remedial gymnast masseur in every hospital! A social demand!' Dutch magazine for Heilgymnastics and Massage. 1934:3;44-45.
2. WP Nuyten. The Heilgymnast masseur in the hospital. Dutch magazine for Heilgymnastics and Massage. 1939:8;220-224.