

History of Physiotherapy Foundation

The historical role of the physiotherapist in spas

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Introduction

How should we imagine working in health spas of the remedial gymnast/masseur, the predecessor of today's physiotherapist, at the beginning of the last century? That is very difficult without documented sources about the spas in the Netherlands. Of the

Healing gymnastics, which emerged in the Netherlands in the first half of the 19th century under the influence of the Swedish and German medical gymnastics, we are aware of various publications.¹

Curiosity about this topic was aroused at the History of Physiotherapy Foundation by a donation of a plaque from Dr. C. Mom, doctor in naturopathic medicine, to which we have previously paid attention.^{2,3,4}



Unveiling plaque Dr. JC Mom at the SGF location.

After publishing this plaque, the SGF was approached by a granddaughter of Dr. J. Mom, who had read the article. She brought us on the trail of a spa in Breda where he

namely, turned out to have been director Bad Wörishofen, which was published in WO II.



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Commemorative plaque on the site of the former spa town of Bad Wörishofen in Breda.



Spa Bad Wörishofen 1939. For more extensive documentation see info under references.

In order to investigate more specifically, we asked ourselves the following questions: What was meant by a spa and how many or which spas were involved in the Netherlands? And what about the domain of the remedial gymnast/masseur?

Spas, where do they come from?

Spas have actually been around since ancient times, the Romans used hot springs for their

thermal baths. In Heerlen, the foundations of a Roman spa town, the current thermal baths museum, still lie.

www.thermenmuseum.nl

In the current Netherlands, however, a spa is initially thought to be a beautiful location in South or East

Europe. All places where 'Bad' stands for are renowned 'Kur Orts' (Bad Alexanderbad, Bad Brückenau etc.).



Physiotherapy treatment room in Zurich 1945.

In the photo above we see a treatment room of one such spa in

Zurich from 1945 where patients were treated as part of physical technique, exercise therapy and/or massage.

What is a spa?

The definition is: "A spa is a resort that focuses on relaxation and recreation, but with a medical connotation value and considered beneficial to health through medicinal springs or healthy air".

What about in the Netherlands with such spas?

In the Netherlands we know many names for institutions that also included spas in the past. Initially, there was talk of a convalescent home, spa, guest house, hospice, sanatorium, home, and later on rehabilitation center, hospital, nursing home, clinic and recently we also know the care hotel. Yet a spa in the Netherlands was less

odd man out in the past than we sometimes think.

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We knew the Kurhaus in Scheveningen, for example, but also other institutions that settled on the sea especially at the beginning of the last century. by the sea such as Zeehospitium in Katwijk and the former sanatorium for TB patients in Heliomare (Latin for sun and sea) where patients stayed in the open air 24 hours a day with the hope of recovery.



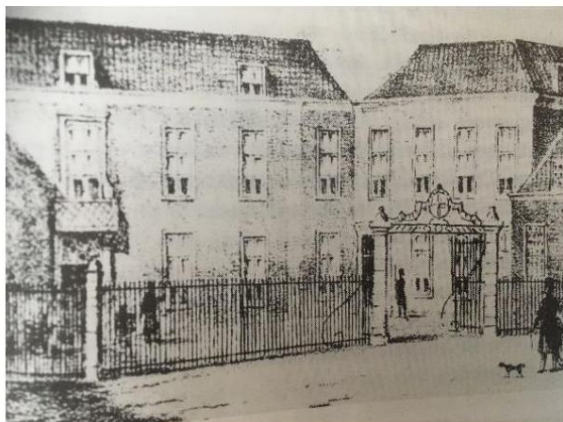
Heliomare in Wijk aan Zee, cures in the open air by the sea in 1938, now transformed into a rehabilitation center.



Former sanatorium Dekkerswald in Groesbeek, located in a wooded area because of the open air, formerly for the rehabilitation of TB patients, now still in use for pulmonary rehabilitation.

A lesser known example is 'It Buitenpaleis' in The Hague where Prof. dr. Johann Heine from Würzburg a orthopedic institution wanted with his new medicine with covers and sea baths and went to the Netherlands to build his spa, although this was short-lived (1770-1838). But we really had choirs in the Netherlands.

The spa "Buitenpaleis" in The Hague of Prof. dr. J Heine in 1770.



In the Netherlands, however, the spa remained only associated with "the sick man". For example, in 1899 we already had a



Current health resort in Bad Brückenau in Bavaria where many infirm gymnasts are employed.

Now we also see a trend of spas emerging in the Netherlands but without the role of the doctor and physiotherapist. The connection is actually no longer there with the medical field. A missed opportunity!! Nevertheless, we suspect that, in addition to a permanent role for doctors in spas, there is also a role of physiotherapists in health spas in the Netherlands if we look at the domain descriptions at the time.

Domain and historical role of remedial gymnastics/massage last century

Fortunately, we can rely on extensive documentation about the domain of remedial gymnastics and massage.¹ Remedial gymnastics and massage were explicitly linked to surgery at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the last century.³

"Association for the care of the handicapped".

There people wanted sanatoriums and spas in the Netherlands

for building. However, to keep "the healthy man" healthy? That became like seen luxury and for this we really had to go abroad where cures are traditionally reimbursed for everyone, although it is often called 'wellness' nowadays. Many infirmary gymnasts and physiotherapists (mostly from the Netherlands) currently work daily in spas in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

The rise of orthopedics in surgery there was an increasing claim by the medical world to massage and exercise therapy as part of remedial gymnastics. This was mainly due to the increasing interest in this branch of medicine, which included remedial gymnastics and massage. In fact, massage was only allowed to take place under medical supervision, after all: *"what a wide field is left here for the quack?"*¹

There are also extensive sources about the resistance of the medical world against non-medical practitioners, in this case the gymnastics specialists who were involved in massage and remedial gymnastics, testify to the document: *'The domain question in the medical world: (1880-1889): resistance against the remedial gymnast'* and statements of the Nederlands Maatschappij der

Medicine (NMG): *"The practice of orthopedics and massage by unauthorized persons must be prevented".* 1

From these descriptions we can better understand how a doctor like Dr. J. Mom was extensively involved in the practice of remedial gymnastics, massage and physical therapy in a spa in Breda. See info under references.

The forerunners of today's physiotherapists were therefore on the one hand doctors or on the other hand remedial gymnasts/masseurs who worked strictly under the supervision of doctors, as appears from a quote from J. Schoondermark in 1886:

*"Today, methodically performed massage has already become commonplace for all doctors, and those who do not already practice it themselves, at least prescribe it, because it should no longer be missing from the therapeutic repertoire".*6

We can cautiously conclude from this that there must indeed have been a historical role of physiotherapeutic procedures in health spas in the Netherlands at the beginning of the last century, whether or not filled in by doctors.

What can we learn from it?

First of all, that good and documented descriptions of the activities of the remedial gymnast/masseur in

The Netherlands in a health resort, at the beginning of the last century, are missing and it is therefore it is no longer so self-evident that a current physiotherapist could play a role in this. This is in contrast to the extensive descriptions we know of remedial gymnasts/masseurs in

hospitals at the time and this role is indispensable.⁵ We do not want to establish a causal relationship between the lack of such a description and the lack of the current role of the physiotherapist in a health spa. Nevertheless, in current physiotherapy and probably also in medicine, we can

actually no longer imagine that a medical role belongs in a spa. The current physiotherapists

are the connection with our predecessors (and also with the doctors) lost in profession in the 'working field of spas' and possibly with that also lost the *'such an essential preventive part of medicine'*. Another missed opportunity!

In the context of the current rise of the importance of prevention in health care, for which health spas have actually been known for a long time, a reconsideration to (re)introduce the knowledge of the physiotherapist (and doctor) in spas would certainly *be worthwhile ...medici and para medici....move with the times....!!*

However, there seems to be a contradiction in the word spa in a spa. Yet even 'healthy' people went to a spa to stay healthy. The name physiotherapist is also inextricably linked to therapy (for 'sick' people). Don't we want to keep people healthy with our knowledge?

Prevention is high on the national political agenda and at the top of the agenda of the World Health Organization (WHO).

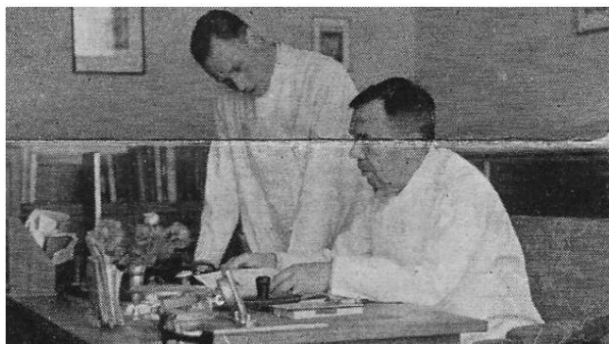
Physiotherapy will end up in the museum at this point if we don't go along with it go..... *know your history and modernize your profession with it!!*

References

1. Terlouw Th.JA The rise of the remedial gymnastics profession in the 19th century. About rare amphibians in a frog country. Royal Library, The Hague. p.260,261, 168. 1991.
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5. Vossen HPLM, De Wijer A. Hospital physiotherapy. Cry for help from a health gymnast. History of Physiotherapy Foundation. PhysioPraxis 2018, 27(3), 6.
6. J. Schoondermark Jr. Quote from the Geneeskundige Courant, 1886. Source: Terlouw Th.JA The rise of the remedial gymnastics profession in the 19th century. About rare amphibians in a frog country. Royal Library, The Hague. p.266.1991.

Documentation Bad Wörishofen'

This spa was named after the Bavarian town of the same name 'Bad Wörishofen', where there is still a Kurort (<https://www.bad-woerishofen.de/>) and the same Kneipp waterings are given as in the former Breda spa. us on the memorial plaque.



dr. J. Mom with assistant in spa town Breda



Treatment room 'Physical technique' from dr. J. Mom

See next page "Submission notification"

Bad Woerishofen'

Bad Wörishofen

*De bekende inrichting in
Ginneken, waar velen
genezing vinden*

Ingezonden Mededeeling

Toen aan het eind van de vorige eeuw te Wörishofen in Beieren de arts Kneipp zijn inrichting stichtte, waar hij zijn methode van koud-waterbehandeling toepaste, beteekende dit iets nieuws op het gebied van de geneeskunde. Ook in Nederland vond zijn methode navolging en het was de Tilburgsche arts Dr. S. C. M. Soer, die in 1893 in Ginneken een inrichting voor hydrotherapie stichtte, naar het model van de inrichtingen in Wörishofen. Sedert 1918 berust de medische leiding van Bad Wörishofen bij Dr. J. C. Mom, die in 1921 van deze stichting een volledige inrichting heeft gemaakt voor Physische Therapie, d.w.z. natuurkundige geneeswijze. In plaats van het oude gebouw verrees een nieuwe inrichting en het voormalige hotel Duivelsbrug werd een internaat voor die patiënten, die buiten Ginneken wonen. Het klimaat van Ginneken behoort volgens de meteorologische en klimatologische gegevens tot de beste van ons land en met zijn zand, bosch en heide is het een ideaal oord voor herstellenden en voor rheumatieklidders. In „Bad Wörishofen” kan men behandeld worden voor rheumatiek (ischias), stofwisselingsziekten, algemeene zwakte, stoornissen in den bloedsomloop (z.a. te hooge en te lage bloeddruk, circulatiestoornissen in de extremiteiten), hartziekten en zenuwlijden. Toegerust met de meest practische uitvindingen van de moderne wetenschap behandelen Dr. Mom en zijn assistent dokter De Wilde hier hun patiënten door middel van vele soorten baden, hoogtezon, intensol, electrotherapie, massage, diathermie, kortegolf enz. Men heeft met deze geneeswijze buitengewoon goede resultaten bereikt en het gevolg is dan ook geweest, dat vele patiënten uit het geheele land

