

## POGP CONFERENCE 2018

# MASIC: Mothers with Anal Sphincter Injuries in Childbirth

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### Abstract

Launched in March 2017, the MASIC Foundation was set up to support women who have sustained anal sphincter injuries during childbirth. The charity's trustees collaborate with committees across the UK, promoting their work, educating new parents and raising awareness among healthcare professionals, and they also lobby government bodies. The MASIC Foundation provides a support network for a group of mothers who otherwise receive variable degrees of help across the country. This paper outlines the charity's aims, and explains how physiotherapists can help to move it forward.

*Keywords:* anal sphincter injury, charitable foundation, childbirth, MASIC, mothers.

### Introduction

The MASIC Foundation (Fig. 1) was set up to support women who have sustained anal sphincter injuries during childbirth (MASIC 2019a). Launched in March 2017, this new charity has been growing in strength over the past 2 years. It now has a group of 12 trustees who have been recruited from a variety of healthcare specialties, patient groups and the legal community. These trustees collaborate with committees across the UK, promoting their work, educating new parents and raising awareness among healthcare professionals, and they also lobby government bodies. Their work is very important because it provides a support network for a group of mothers who otherwise receive variable degrees of help across the country.

As physiotherapists who specialize in pelvic health, we often meet and treat women who have suffered from obstetric anal sphincter injuries (OASIS). Our local health boards may have set up a referral pathway. We may have first-rate levels of communication with our multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), and we may be providing excellent multidisciplinary care for these women. However, this may not be the case for every area of the UK. The MASIC Foundation aims to form a referral pathway for these individuals that will be adopted by health boards across the UK.

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The logo for the MASIC Foundation, featuring the word "MASIC" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white with a grey shadow effect, giving it a 3D appearance. The letters are set against a dark grey background.

Mothers with Anal Sphincter Injuries in Childbirth

**Figure 1.** The MASIC Foundation logo.

Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy has been approached by the MASIC Foundation, and will be offering physiotherapy support in the future, so you are likely to hear more about this charity soon.

### The MASIC Foundation

The MASIC Foundation has five main aims (MASIC 2019a):

- (1) The charity campaigns to influence changes in healthcare policies in order to avoid these injuries and improve detection.
- (2) It promotes awareness of these problems among medical and healthcare professionals. According to the website, "Today's doctors have little exposure to obstetric practice" (MASIC 2019a). General practitioners (GPs), midwives and health visitors are largely unaware of the frequency and long-term consequences of OASIS.
- (3) It advances awareness: "The public are unaware that over 10% of mothers have some

impairment of bowel control after birth” (MASIC 2019a).

- (4) It promotes research into the causes, prevention and treatment of OASIS.
- (5) Above all else, it supports mothers who have sustained these injuries and their families.

What can you do as a physiotherapist to help support the MASIC Foundation?

- (1) There are the obvious charitable donations that you can provide via the “DONATE” button on every page of the website (<https://masic.org.uk/>). Any funds would be greatly appreciated and used to further the charity’s aims.
- (2) Physiotherapists working in the National Health Service (NHS) need to ensure that they are in communication with their local colorectal surgeon. This is especially important for those who are not yet able to provide a specific physiotherapy service for this group of women. If you do not know who your local consultant is, contact The Pelvic Floor Society (<http://thepelvicfloor.society.co.uk/>) to find out more, and locate who may be working in or near your area (e-mail: [info@acpgbi.org.uk](mailto:info@acpgbi.org.uk)).
- (3) Look into setting up an MDT with your local colorectal consultant. This team should include midwives, health visitors, GPs, obstetricians and gynaecologists, psychiatrists, sexual health practitioners, colorectal nurses, urogynaecologists, physiotherapists, physiologists, and counsellors or psychologists. Obstetric anal sphincter injuries can affect a woman physically and psychologically, and in many cases, her whole family is affected. The more all-encompassing the MDT is, the more likely it is that you will be able to fully support a woman with such an injury.
- (4) For those of you who are uncertain about the management of women with OASIS, but would like to learn more, there are many courses that you can access. I would specifically encourage you to look into the POGP entry-level course on lower bowel dysfunction (POGP 2019). The MASIC Foundation also provide education and

awareness days (MASIC 2019b). Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy will be attending an invitation-only event in 2019. An awareness day has also been scheduled at the Royal Society of Arts in London on 9 May 2019. The theme of this event, “Not Just an African Phenomenon: Obstetric-Related Fistulas in the UK”, will be fistulas related to OASIS.

## Conclusion

Now you know how you can get involved with the MASIC Foundation and help mothers with OASIS. You can follow the charity on Twitter (@masic\_uk), and go to its website for more information and details of upcoming events (MASIC 2019c).

## References

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- MASIC (2019b) *Education Days*. [WWW document.] URL <https://masic.org.uk/events/training-days/>
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*Gillian McCabe is a clinical specialist physiotherapist with over a decade of experience in both the NHS and private practice. After qualifying from the University of the West of England, Bristol, in 2004, she began to work in the NHS. Her passion for women’s health physiotherapy was ignited when she worked a 6-month rotation at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff. This quickly led to a permanent position working alongside the women’s health physiotherapy team in Cardiff. Gillian continued her learning by obtaining a Master’s degree qualification in women’s health physiotherapy from the University of Bradford in 2015. In 2008, she set up her private practice alongside her NHS role, and following the growth of her business, she made the difficult decision to leave the NHS in January 2017 so that she could focus on providing first-class care to her clients. Gillian now delivers pelvic health physiotherapy services in her own busy private practice in Cardiff.*