

# The Role of Physical Therapy in Treating Pelvic Pain



**Balanced Body**  
PHYSICAL THERAPY

By Laurie Smith PT

# What is a Women's Health Physical Therapist?

- ▶ A PT with highly specialized training who has demonstrated proficiency in treating:
  - Urinary incontinence
  - Prenatal and postpartum pain
  - Lymphedema
  - Pelvic Pain



# Team Approach

- ▶ Urogynecology - Gina Sternschuss, MD
- ▶ UP Health Systems Urology Marquette - Diane Young, MD and Jay Lonsway, MD
- ▶ OBGYN Associates of Marquette
  - Breanna Pond, MD
  - Eric Jentoft, MD
  - Jorrie Houle, DO
  - Stephanie Grosvenor, DO
  - Robert Cook, MD
- ▶ Bell Women's Care
  - Kim Baker, DO
  - Kelly Menge, DO
  - Joe-La Dowdy, DO



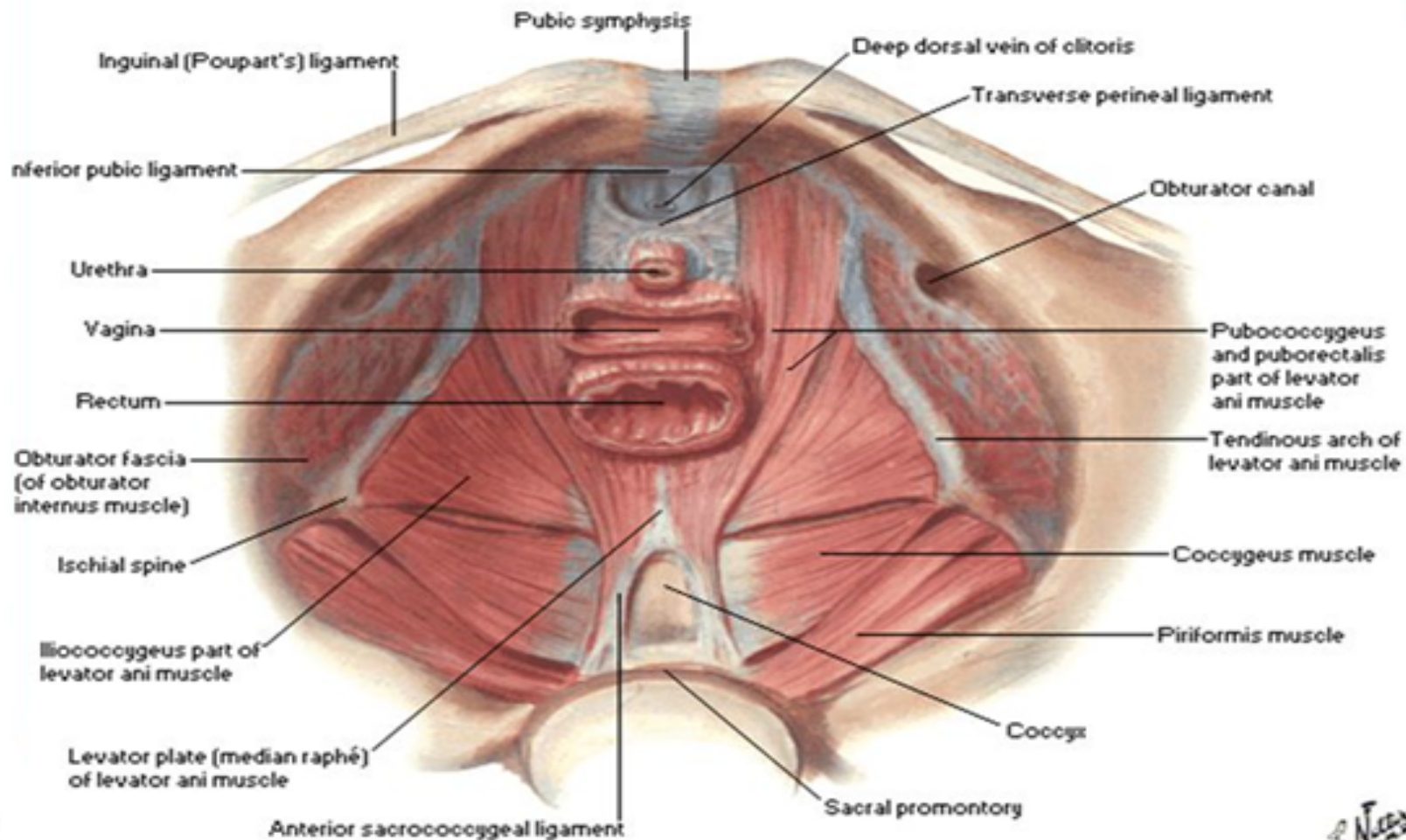
# Pelvis Anatomy

- ▶ Bony pelvis
- ▶ Organs
- ▶ Fascia and ligaments
- ▶ Pelvic floor muscles and nerves



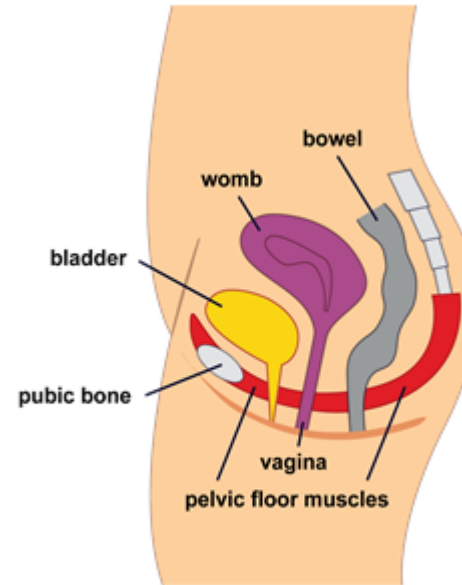
# Pelvic Floor - Female

## Pelvic Diaphragm of Female Superior View



# Role of the Pelvic Floor Muscles

- ▶ The \*levator ani
  - Prevents strain on the organs
  - Compresses the urethra - major role in continence
  - Only transverse load bearing muscle in the body
- ▶ Superficial Pelvic floor
  - Sexual Function
  - Clitoral erection
- ▶ Anal sphincter
  - Internal and external - external we can control
- ▶ \*Puborectalis - fuses behind the rectum provides control of the anal rectal angle which is important in defecation



# Pelvic Floor Muscle Dysfunction

- ▶ Weakness
- ▶ Chronic spasm and holding
- ▶ Incoordination
- ▶ Lack of synergistic function with other key muscle groups of the trunk and hips



# Causes of Pelvic Pain

- ▶ Muscle spasm
- ▶ Nerve injury
- ▶ Scar tissue
- ▶ Emotional overlay from abuse history
- ▶ Trauma - accidents, childbirth, sexual abuse
- ▶ Disease processes
  - Endometriosis
  - Interstitial Cystitis





# Pain Associated with Sex

- ▶ Muscle spasm and tightness
- ▶ Episiotomy and scar related pain
- ▶ Age related changes
  - Decreased in hormones causing tissue dryness
  - Long term abstinence
- ▶ Vulvodynia and vaginismus

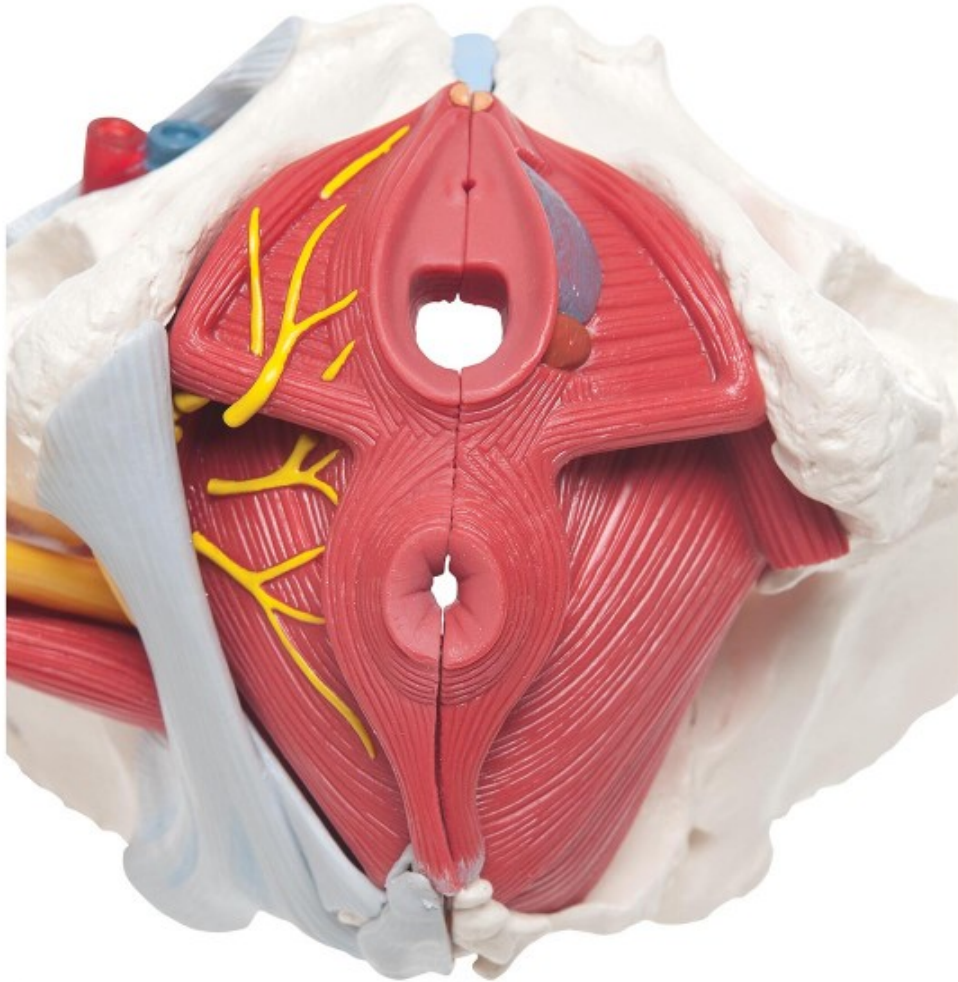


# Interstitial Cystitis

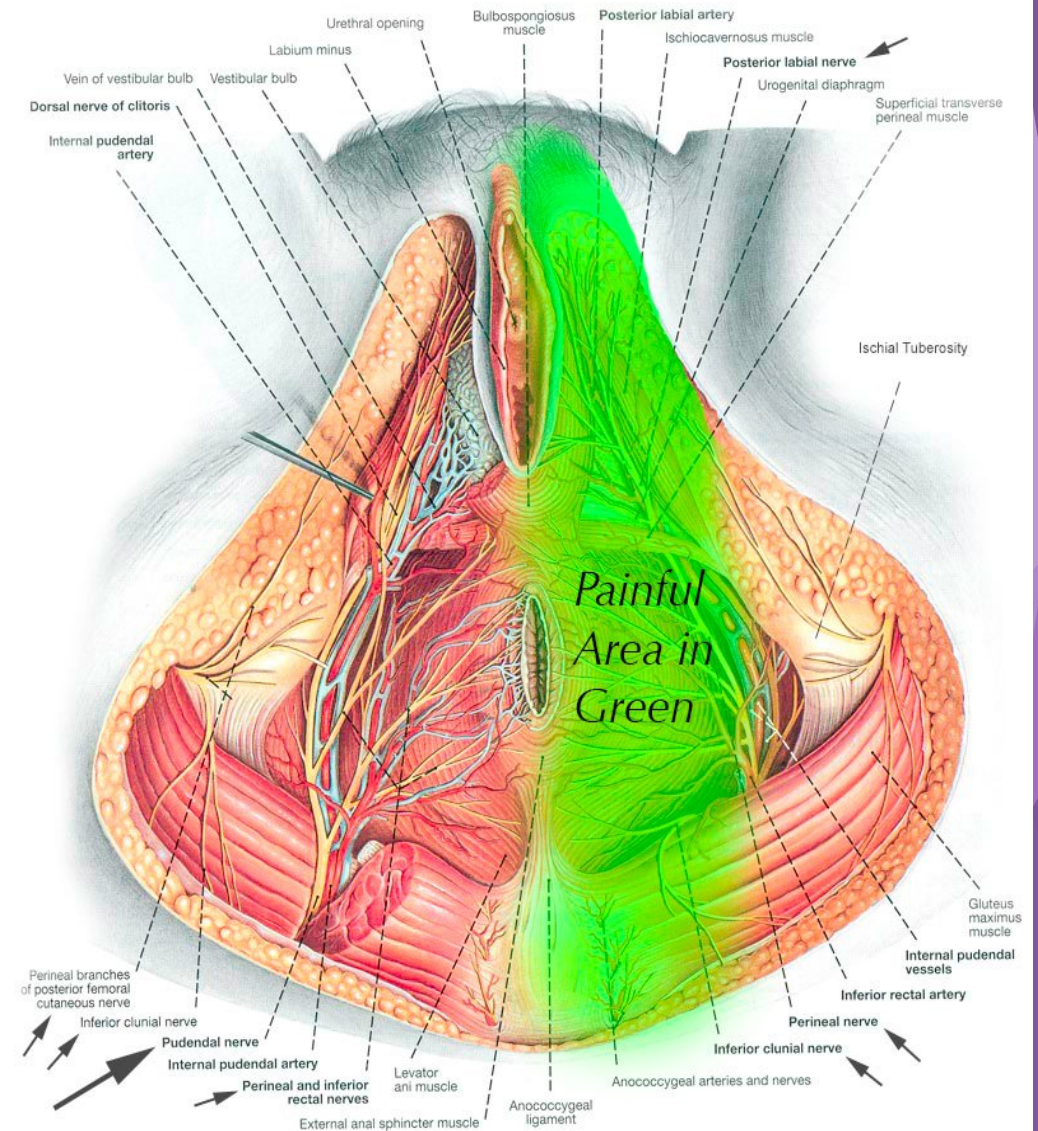
- ▶ Urinary frequency and urgency
- ▶ Pain with urination
- ▶ Pelvic floor muscle spasm
- ▶ Pelvic floor muscle incoordination
- ▶ Diagnosed by urology or urogynecology



# Pudental Neuralgia



## Female Pudendal Nerve



# Physical Therapy Treatment Options for Pelvic Pain

- ▶ Assess posture and movement of the trunk, pelvic girdle and hips
  - Fascial planes
- ▶ Relieve muscle spasm of the pelvic floor
- ▶ Improve flexibility of scar tissue
- ▶ Improve coordination and possibly strength of the pelvis and trunk
- ▶ Improve mobility of the connective tissue of the pelvis surrounding organs and joints
- ▶ Utilize physical therapy modalities such as electrical stimulation, ultrasound and tens
- ▶ Improve flexibility and strength of synergistic muscle groups



# Physical Therapy for Incontinence

- ▶ Urinary incontinence
- ▶ Fecal incontinence
- ▶ Primary focus is addressing strength and coordination of the pelvic floor and trunk



# Questions?

- ▶ Thank you for your time and attentiveness!



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