

## Study on the History of Korean Physical Therapy

Since physical therapy was first introduced in Korea, it has been 50 years past and Korean physical therapy has made rapid progress. However, history or educational system of Korean physical therapy is still not known worldwide. Now, for Korean physical therapy to go beyond Asia and leap toward the world, endless studies, efforts and publicity are required.

Korean physical therapy first began by missionaries dispatched from other countries like America and Canada with Korean War, which occurred in 1950. After the War, Korean Physical Therapy is developed very fast. Korean Physical Therapy Association was founded in October 1, 1965 and many physical therapist were discharged. Korea became a full member of World Confederation of Physical Therapy(WCPT) in 1974, and held the 2nd Asia Pacific Confederation of Physical Therapy assembly in 1984 and WCPT assembly in 2005. Today, in 2010, licensed physical therapists are about 35,000 and there are physical therapy departments in 74 universities, and 17 universities have master's or doctor's degree courses. And there are many academic journals(more than 10) related to physical therapy that are published.

Many Korean physical therapists are working at various countries like America or Australia, and are acknowledged with excellent treatment technology and academic studies. This thesis aims to shed new light to the history and educational system reorganization of Korean physical therapy and introduce it to the world, and establish the historical foundation to develop Korean physical therapy into the international level.

Key words : *Korean physical therapy, Korean physical therapy association, World Confederation of Physical Therapy(WCPT)*

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## INTRODUCTION

Physical therapy treats disabilities and handicaps due to various accidents or diseases, and plays a significant role in helping patients return to being a member of the society. According to the definition of physical therapy stated by World Confederation for Physical Therapy(WCPT), it diagnoses patients with impairment, functional restriction and disability or any other diseases, confirms the execution process, and includes examinations for intervention. Also, physical therapy is a therapeutic intervention that is premeditated, possible to help, and able to control, relieving impairment and functional restriction.

Therapeutic intervention includes therapeutic exercise; manual therapy; prescription, production, application of aid, adaptation, support, protection tools and equipment; airway securement technology; dynamical electrotherapy tool; patients education.

Modern physical therapy began in the early 1900s, as infectious diseases were prevalent. At this time, a team of new labor force that carried out examinations, evaluations and treatment was formed to manage many patients, and they became physical therapists. Afterwards, as a program was developed for physical recovery of the people injured from World War I, modern physical therapy began.

According to WCPT, 101 nations are registered as

members, 2009 and about 300,000 physical therapists worldwide are working hard for the rehabilitation of patients. In Korea, physical therapy was introduced through foreign medical support during the time of Korean War in 1950. And it was systematically developed by missionaries sent to Korea. Today, about 33,000 physical therapists are passionately at work in Korea for the health of Korean people.

It has been 50 years or so since physical therapy was first introduced in Korea, and Korean physical therapy has made rapid progress. However, history or educational system of Korean physical therapy is still not widely known worldwide. Therefore, this thesis aims to shed new light to the history and educational system reorganization of Korean physical therapy, introduce it to the world, and establish the historical foundation to develop Korean physical therapy into the international level.

## KOREAN PHYSICAL THERAPY

### History of Korean Physical Therapy Education

#### Introduction of Physical Therapy in Korea

It was the late 1800s when Western medicine was introduced in Korea. This was when Korea(Chosun) began to contact other nations and had a treaty of peace and amity. It especially began to progress gradually as missionaries sent to Korea introduced Western medicine, and in 1884, Severance Hospital was founded by Allen, and Western medicine planted its roots in Korea.

It was 1945, right after the end of World War II, when physical therapy was introduced in Korea by American physical therapist Geraldine Lindberg, who worked in the US Army hospital in Korea until 1949. In the same year of 1949, American Methodist missionary and physical therapist Thelma Maw(Korean name: Maw Woo-sook) was dispatched to Korea, and the first physical therapy in Korea began in Severance Hospital. At that time, by mostly introducing movement therapy and home physical therapy programs and exercises, the enlightenment and publicity of physical therapy was mainly done rather than practical treatment. In June 25, 1950, Korean War broke out and there were many injured people, which required physical therapists for fighting power maintenance and rehabilitation of injured soldiers. Due to this need, physical therapists were trained with the help of the medical technology support of America, Canada, Denmark, and Swed-

en activities of foreign physical therapists. Physical therapists were trained through a few months of short-term course, and provided physical therapy to injured soldiers. Physical therapy technology was introduced after the war according to medical technology support of each nation of the world, and at that time, Koreans worked with physical therapists dispatched from many countries, and physical therapy began to spread in Korea.

As the war ended in 1953, physical therapy was actively being performed in Severance Hospital with Thelma Maw as the center of it. Physical therapy was mostly executed to patients injured in the war, and amputees of arms and legs and children with hemiplegia and polio mostly received therapy. At the same time, Dr.R.A.Torry established Korean Amputee Rehabilitation Center in Daejeon and opened a Seoul branch in Seoul Severance Hospital, supplying prosthetic arms and legs for many amputees. Also, Mrs. Adams, the representative of Church World Service(CWS), provided food and shelter to children disabled from polio in the form of a sheltered house, and established a brace production center in Severance Hospital to produce braces. Since then, the foundation of physical therapy was completed in Severance Hospital, with the integration of electrotherapy, phototherapy, hydrotherapy and movement therapy, production of prosthetic arms and legs, braces, and functional training.

In October, 1958, National Medical Center was opened in Seoul under the cooperation between the Korean government and technology of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. At that time, the first physical therapists ever to come to the department of physical therapy were Miss Martha K. Bencher (Sweden), and Miss Kirstein Schemist(Denmark). Since then, foreign physical therapists took turns coming to Korea and propagated physical therapy in Korea.

#### Beginning of Korean Physical Therapy Education in Korea

In September 23, 1959, Marion E. Current(Korean name: Ae ryun Ku), a missionary of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, was dispatched to Severance Hospital. She not only provided physical therapy to patients but also gathered trainees and began to give lectures on physical therapy, centering around Severance Hospital. As Severance Hospital moved from Seoul Station to Sinchon in 1962, there was facility expansion and physical therapy activities grew immensely. At this time, Miss Rara Mae Johnston(America) came to Severance Hospital in

Korea as a member of the same foundation as the Methodist mission Thelma Maw. She established a physical therapists' library in Severance Hospital and put in a great deal of effort to improve the quality of Korea's physical therapy. She also propagated a new approach to physical therapy for children with cerebral palsy at disabled children's rehabilitation hospital, and spread the importance of physical therapy to each household through home visit therapy. Also, in 1963, Korea University Health College began to train physical therapists for the first time. So the education of Korean physical therapy began, thanks to the dedicated efforts of missionaries from America and Canada, and physical therapists of many other countries.

#### **Educational System of Korean Physical Therapy**

For physical therapists' training centers in 1950s, there was a three-month short-term course of National Rehabilitation Center and probation courses in a few general hospitals, where Koreans received basic physical therapy education from foreign physical therapists. Then, full-scale college education began in January 28, 1963, as a two-year course of physical therapy department in Korea University Health College was established by Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development law. The curriculum at the time took on the aspect of modern curriculum, a total of 48 credits with 6 cultural subjects and 31 special study subjects. In 1974, physical therapy department was installed for the second time in Shingu University, then Dongnam Health University and Wonkwang Health Science University in 1976. Afterward, it was installed in Daegu Health College in 1977 and Gwangju Health College University in 1978, and physical therapy education was executed in a two-year college course. In 1991, the two-year course was reorganized to a three-year course. The first four-year formal university course was established in 1979, at Yonsei University Health Department as a major of rehabilitation medical technology, which lit up the academic development of physical therapy. After that, four-year formal university courses continued to open in Daegu University, Yongin University and Sahmyook University, and Korean physical therapy marked a new academic turning point. Today, there are both four-year and three-year curriculums in Korea.

Even as a four-year university graduate, he was given a bachelor's degree for health or physical science, because at that time in Korea there was no bachelor's degree for physical therapy. Then in 1994, physical therapy major was established in Yongin

University, and as students graduated in 1998, they became the first ever in Korea to receive the bachelor's degree on physical therapy, due to the effort of Kyung Ok Min, a professor of physical therapy in Yongin University. As a master's course of physical therapy was installed Rehabilitation & Health Science graduate school and a doctor's course in graduate school in Yongin University, there was the first physical therapy master's degree and doctor's degree in Korea, which enabled Korean physical therapy to mark a new turning point in educational system and prepared a stronger base of academic development. Since then, physical therapy department increased continuously, and today in 2010, there are physical therapy departments in 74 universities. And according to the global trend to increase the degree of physical therapists and develop Korean physical therapy, there are graduate schools in 17 universities and master's and doctor's courses continue to increase in many schools.

#### **Foundation and Activities of Korean Physical Therapy Association**

##### **Legislation of Law Related to Physical Therapy**

Since physical therapists were trained in Korea University in 1963, medical assistant law was legislated and proclaimed as Law no.1380 in July 31, 1963, as the Korean law related to physical therapists, and its enforcement ordinance was legislated as Presidential decree no.1991 in November 26, 1964. Therefore, Korean physical therapists are now under legal protection, and are given the position and duty stated by law. Then medical technician law (Law no.2534) was legislated and proclaimed in February 16, 1973, its enforcement ordinance(Presidential decree no.6864) was legislated in September 20, 1973, and its enforcement regulations was legislated in October 17, 1973, stipulating the work range of Korean physical therapists and their proper roles into law.

##### **Foundation of Korean Physical Therapy Association**

In October 1, 1965, Korean Physical Therapy Association was founded by Seoul Hanil General Hospital for the development of Korean physical therapy, improvement of physical therapists' qualities, and advancement of social welfare. Il hun Suk was elected as the first president. Later it received corporate authorization as Korean Physical Therapy Association in October 18, 1966, for Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs authorization no.762, and was registered to Seoul Central District

Court commercial registration office in January 17, 1967, as corporate no.935. Also, in the 4th regular general meeting in 1969, Korean physical therapy's codes of ethics were legislated for the first time, which raised the consciousness of physical therapists and planted the spirit of volunteer work for the society. Since then, Korean physical therapy developed in active movement centering around Korean Physical Therapy Association.

#### **Activities of Korean Physical Therapy Association**

As legal and institutional system was prepared, Korea joined World Confederation of Physical Therapy(WCPT) as a full member in 1974 through the 8th World Confederation of Physical Therapy assembly held in Montreal, Canada. In April 27, 1980, 6 Asian countries including Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia and Hong Kong gathered together and held a foundation assembly of Asian Confederation for Physical Therapy(ACPT), and later did many activities internationally for the union of Asian countries and development of physical therapy. And with the participation of Japanese Physical Therapy Association conference held in June 16, 1977, as the start, they held the first national conference in October 28, 1978, and actively took part in the development of academics through the conference and interchange of world physical therapists.

From September 19 to 25, 1993, Korea participated in the 5th ACPT Assembly and International Conference Opening held in Taipei, Taiwan; From May 23 to 28, 1999, Korea also participated in the 14th WCPT Assembly and 13th International Conference held in Yokohama, Japan. In October 1, 2000, the 45th General Conference was held in Seoul attended by 1,000 participants including Sandra Moore, president of WCPT, and showed the academic excellence of Korean physical therapy to the world. Conferences in and out of the country have been successfully held every year since then, and in 2005 WCPT assembly was held in Seoul, the capital city of Korea, showing the developmental state of Korean physical therapy directly to world physical therapists. Also, the 50th National Conference was held in 2008, and so far nation-wide conferences are being held continuously.

Ever since, about 50 national physical therapists conferences and various volunteer service contests have been held centering around Korean Physical Therapy Association in which they work for the nation's health, educate physical therapists by invit-

ing world-renowned professors to improve the level of Korean physical therapy, and keep on developing with endless efforts, and now Korea has risen to the global level.

Even today, Korean therapists are participating in assemblies of WCPT and many world conferences constantly and endeavoring for the interchange of physical therapy studies. And many physical therapists are participating in all kinds of medical related academies, conferences and symposiums, raising the prestige of Korean physical therapy. They are also actively participating in volunteer work for the disabled people such as disabled Olympics.

#### **State of Academic Journals Related to Physical Therapy Published in Korea**

Korean Physical Therapy Association held various conferences in and out of the country and published academic journals for technological and academic development of Korean physical therapy. The "first issue" of Korean Physical Therapy Association journal was published in November 6, 1973, and it was published ever since in the form of an association journal, but was changed and published as the association's official academic journal in June 10, 1977. The title was "The Journal of Korean Academy of Physical Therapist", and it played a major role in the active research activities of Korean physical therapists. Through the publication of such academic journal, Korean physical therapy developed technically and academically. In July 21, 1994, The Journal of Korean Academy of Physical Therapist showed active movement such as being registered as the government publication. Since then the academic journal was published regularly every year, and in 2008 its title was changed to "The Journal of Korean Academy of Physical Therapy Science" and it has been endeavoring the academic development of Korean physical therapy. Later, with the efforts of the association, various physical therapy related academies are established and journals published until now; for such journals, there is The Korean Society of Physical Therapy" published in 1989 and Korean Academy of University trained Physical Therapists" published in 1994. And in 2010, "The Journal of International Academy of Physical Therapy Research" in which physical therapists of all countries can participate in academic discussions and present theses, will be published for the first time in the world, centering around professor Kyung Ok Min in Yongin University and supervised by Korea.

## CONCLUSION

The origin of Korean medical techniques comes from Oriental medicine, which is the native medicine of Korea that analyzes the physical constitution and treats and prevents diseases. Oriental medicine, which was passed down through Old Chosun and the period of the Three States, went through Goryeo and Chosun, and greatly developed in the present. Especially in Korea, other than Oriental therapy using acupuncture and moxa treatment, hydrotherapy using hot spring was executed many times, along with other various traditional folk remedies. Therefore, physical therapy has already been executed in Korea using various physical agents. The reason why Korean physical therapy has developed rapidly despite the short history of it is because, like Korea went through rapid economic growth based on such medical foundation of the ancestors, it has promoted academic and technical development of physical therapy with positive and diligent activities.

Today, many Koreans are working as physical therapists in not only Korea but in various countries like America or Australia, and are acknowledged with excellent treatment technology and academic

studies. But Korean physical therapy is still not that well known worldwide. Now, for Korean physical therapy to go beyond Asia and leap toward the world, endless studies, efforts and publicity are required.

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