

Recommendation for Accreditation of Urogynecology Globally

IUGA: Who We Are

The International Urogynecological Association (IUGA) is a global, multi-professional society whose mission is advancement of urogynecological knowledge and patient care globally through education and promotion of basic and clinical research on disorders of the female pelvic floor.

Urogynecology is a field that cares for women with complex disorders of the pelvic floor including bladder, bowel, gynecologic and musculoskeletal dysfunction. The specialty requires multidisciplinary expertise and collaboration.

The vision of IUGA is to improve the lives of all women worldwide with pelvic floor disorders, at all stages of life, through providing excellent healthcare. IUGA has been able to realize some of the mission and vision through knowledge creation, synthesis, dissemination, and advocacy.

In a continued effort to realize this vision, IUGA would like to advocate for countries worldwide to recognize urogynecology as subspecialty.

Problem statement

Women with pelvic floor disorders are not well cared for by any one specialty including Gynecology, Urology or Colorectal specialists. While aspects of care can be delivered by gynecologists, urologists and/or colorectal specialists; a urogynecologist can comprehensively treat patients successfully. However, without formal recognition or accreditation, neither patients nor providers are confident in who can effectively treat these conditions.

In many places around the world, there is no method to identify or verify experts in the field of urogynecology without accreditation or credentialing. As such, those with an expertise in this area have no opportunity to differentiate themselves from those without this expertise. Often as a result, providers either try to manage on their own providing fragmented care, or even worse, dismiss the complaints of the patient and propagate misinformation.

Often women with pelvic floor disorders are not aware of where to seek care and/or do not have access to appropriate treatment centers. Further, fragmented care leads to misdiagnoses, multiple visits to multiple providers and increasing costs for national healthcare systems. Women with pelvic floor disorders often suffer in silence, leading to decreased work in the workforce and at home and this is worsened with disjointed care across the globe as lives of women can be seriously affected.

Worldwide recognition of urogynecology as sub-specialty helps providers give comprehensive care which saves work force hours, improves health and wellbeing, and decreases healthcare costs.

A Path Forward

As the leading international organization in the field of urogynecology, IUGA has both an opportunity and a responsibility to work globally to improve patient care in the field of urogynecology.

IUGA has contributed significantly to its mission in several ways:

1. Annual professional meetings
2. Webinars and online access to hundreds of educational lectures and videos
3. Informative Sessions for Special Interest Groups
4. IUGA regional symposia
5. Funded grants for observerships and research
6. International Fellowship grants
7. Patient pamphlets and information
8. Resources for providers

Through these efforts, IUGA has witnessed sustained growth in the field of Urogynecology globally. Specifically, physicians who have pursued training through the fellowships are now bringing their expertise back to their countries and forging the path forward to develop urogynecology in their local environments. Those who have been successful, have the support of their local hospitals, societies and governments.

In countries with accreditation of Urogynecology as a subspecialty, a minimum of 2 additional years of training is required after completing specialty training in either Gynecology or Urology followed by specific credentialing.

Medical professionals who are recognized and supported by local governments and official bodies, have access to the appropriate facilities and professional training leading to improvement in health of the population they serve. They often become experts in the field of urogynecology, grow their careers, and increase their patient base and credibility, all with the aim to improve lives of women.

Differentiating experienced practitioners from those with a minimum level of knowledge and practical experience creates a public awareness and trust of those practicing in this field. This lends credibility, not only to the field, but to a country and its healthcare system as such, as it becomes clear that professionals with a recognition have specialized knowledge and added value to patients.

For these reasons, IUGA strongly recommends that local hospitals, professional societies and governing bodies align to facilitate the recognition of Urogynecology as a subspecialty with specific training and credentialing standards.

Below is a roadmap for certification of Urogynecology in countries that have been successful.

A roadmap for certification of urogynecology

Requires 1 or 2 dedicated individuals who have local support to obtain training in urogynecology.

Upon return, they procure the appropriate staffing, equipment and support to practice urogynecology

They often train others (informally in an apprentice model, or more formally by developing a fellowship that is supported by the hospital). If formally accepted, they work with academic institutions or governing bodies to develop a formal recognition requiring an exam and or certification.

They develop local/regional/national professional societies.

Often these individuals and groups of individuals are able to succeed with persistence and tenacity, but some are met with multiple roadblocks and barriers.

Creating awareness towards the (national) societies of the importance of recognizing urogynecology as sub-specialty is the first step to gain results:

- Recognition of urogynecologists helps providers to give comprehensive care within one specialism
- Avoiding misdiagnoses and in-adequate management of the medical situation
- No multiple visits and multiple providers to different medical professionals are required to treat women with pelvic floor disorders.
- Efficient treatment ensures excellent healthcare at all stages of life for women.
- As a result of competent healthcare by urogynecologists, healthcare costs substantially decrease for the healthcare systems and (national) societies.
- The daily lives of women exceptionally improve by specialist care.

In countries that have already have an accreditation, IUGA identifies a huge effort has been done by urogynecological specialists who advocate for urogynecology as they daily experience that excellent healthcare is essential for women with pelvic floor disorders ensuring improvement of their daily life.

Ways of developing a pathway, in collaboration with official bodies, hospitals, healthcare systems and universities, are:

- Promote urogynecology (spread-the-word, presentations, provide information)
- Collaborate with universities to form courses
- Create a syllabus and examinations
- Organize fellowships
- Develop training centers
- Appoint mentors to develop urogynecology on a national level by training young medical professionals with the aim of creating a broader pool of sub-specialists.
- Financial support for faculties from hospitals and (local) governments.
- Create a (national/ regional/local) network of urogynecologists
- Form a national society to advocate for urogynecology
- Collaborate with related specialties such as urologists, colorectal surgeons, nurses, midwives, and physiotherapists to create a stronger voice.

To successfully achieve accreditation for urogynecology, the support of governments, official bodies, national medical associations, healthcare systems and hospitals is essential.

Requirements are:

- Structured training programs
- Fellowship programs for at least 2 years.
- Curricula for urogynecology.
- Adequate resources such as medical supplies, (urodynamic) equipment, instruments
- Facilities/ training centers
- Funding to provide training, resources and facilities.
- Certification from licensed medical universities, and/or (local) governments for the sub-specialty urogynecology.

Accredited countries worldwide

Africa	South Africa
	Ghana
Asia	Indonesia
	Malaysia
	Philippines
	Singapore
	Taiwan
	Thailand
Oceania	Australia
	New Zealand
Europe	United Kingdom
	Switzerland
	Netherlands
	Slovenia
	Turkey
	Czech Republic
	France?
	Spain?
Latin America	Mexico
North America	USA
	Canada?