

Christina Helging Opava, Professor, PhD, RPT
Karolinska Institutet and Karolinska University Hospital
Stockholm, Sweden

Education/Employment Success

Dr. Opava graduated as a physical therapist from Lund University in 1978 and then held clinical physical therapist positions until 1993 when she earned her PhD from Karolinska Institutet (KI). She has since been employed at the Department/Division of Physical Therapy, KI where she became an Associate Professor in 1999 and a full Professor in 2006. Her academic position is joined with one at the Rheumatology Clinic, Karolinska University Hospital.

Highlights/Moments during Education/Employments

Dr. Opava formed her research team focusing on 'Physical Activity and Health in Rheumatic Disease' in 1999. One important aspect of her work is the development, evaluation, and implementation of clinical trials of exercise and physical activity interventions. She has been a pioneer in testing various models of exercise delivery from one-on-one counseling to internet-based interventions using both efficacy and effectiveness study designs. Dr. Opava's publication record lists over 100 scientific publications including peer reviewed original and review papers, short reports and text book chapters, the majority with her as the first or senior author. In 2001 she spent one semester as a visiting professor hosted by Dr. Marian Minor at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Since 2017 she is a foreign adjunct professor at Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam College of Physiotherapy, Pravara Institute of Medical Sciences, Loni, India.

Dr. Opava has supervised 11 PhD students to graduation and has performed extensive teaching at all levels at 15 universities in Sweden and other European countries, in America and in Asia. She has also regularly involved in continuing education of practitioners and dissemination activities targeting patients. Dr. Opava has massive leadership experience from academic and professional organizations as well as from patient associations. She is the current director of the Strategic Research Area Health Care Science at Karolinska Institutet and Umeå University and was the vice president of EULAR representing health professionals from 2013 to 2017. During that time she initiated the first formal collaboration ever between EULAR health professionals and ARHP, on recommendations for the health professional's approach to pain management in arthritis.

ARHP History

Dr. Opava attended, as one of very few European health professionals, her first ARHP meeting in Atlanta in 1992 and became a member the year after. She has since participated regularly as a presenter of her scientific work, as a session moderator and as a workshop facilitator. She has also served at task forces and as a reviewer for Arthritis Care and Research.

Highlight Moments during ARHP History

Dr. Opava received the ARHP distinguished Scholar Award in 2002 and the Ann Kunkel Advocacy Award in 2016, both milestones in her career. She greatly values the international network of colleagues and friends that she has gained through her ARHP membership.