

# Wisconsin Nonprofit Challenging Vagina Stigma to Advance Awareness of Pelvic Organ Prolapse Pandemic

*Childbirth and menopause are primary causes of pelvic organ prolapse, yet fifty percent of women suffer silently with the condition due to societal stigma.*

MUKWONAGO, WI, UNITED STATES,

June 5, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ --

"Don't ask, don't tell is common practice within patient-to-practitioner conversations when it comes to women's below-the-waist health," states Sherrie Palm, Founder of the Association for Pelvic Organ Prolapse Support (APOPS). "Conversation related to unsettling vaginal, vulvar, or rectal symptoms rarely meaningfully occurs. Pelvic organ prolapse is not common knowledge."



Vaginal Health Empowerment is Women's Health Empowerment

Pelvic organ prolapse (POP) is defined as the herniation of pelvic organs into or beyond the vaginal opening. It can cause a variety of distressing symptoms including tissues bulging from the vagina, back or pelvic pressure or pain, urinary or fecal incontinence, urine retention, chronic constipation, sexual dysfunction, or vaginal/vulvar discomfort. These are not isolated concerns; they are interconnected conditions and symptoms impacting millions of women globally.

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When vaginal and intimate health are given the same respect as women's heart, hormone, and breast health, women will finally capture health equity.”

*Sherrie Palm, APOPS Founder*

Recent data underscores a persistent and troubling gap in women's healthcare. The 2024 Origin Pelvic Health Study,

which surveyed 612 women aged 18–59, revealed that 83% experienced at least one pelvic health symptom in the past year, yet [96% had not received a diagnosis](#).

This stark reality highlights how stigma and limited awareness around conditions like POP are

preventing women from seeking essential care. “Pelvic organ prolapse—or any pelvic floor disorder—is still not seen as a ‘respected’ medical condition,” says Dr. Alexandra Dubinskaya, urogynecologist and reconstructive pelvic surgeon. “You can talk about your triple bypass surgery over cocktails, but mention your vagina and the room goes quiet.”

The National Institutes of Health has acknowledged in the NIH 2024 Pelvic Floor PSA that [pelvic floor disorders, including POP, are shrouded in stigma](#), leading to embarrassment and reluctance in seeking help. Efforts are underway to educate both the public and healthcare providers to reduce these barriers.

A 2022 study published in PubMed Central found that [up to 50% of women will develop pelvic organ prolapse](#) at some point in their lifetime. Despite nearly 4,000 years of medical reference dating back to the Kahun Gynecological Papyrus circa 1835 B.C., standardized POP screening during routine pelvic exams remains scarce. Current patient histories often omit critical questions about symptoms regarding vaginal, urinary, defecatory, or sexual dysfunction.

The significant shortfall in both patient awareness and practitioner training continues to hinder early diagnosis and effective management, with serious consequences for women's health quality-of-life outcomes both short and long term. Women's Health, Sports, and Orthopedic specialist Sheree DiBiase, PT, clarified the shortfalls she personally experienced within the practitioner space. “I’m a medical provider. I was embarrassed. I was told by all five OB’s in our group there’s nothing to do about it, let alone given a name for what I had. I had trusted them; I was one of them.”

According to Research Nester, the pelvic organ prolapse repair market is projected to grow from \$441.22 million in 2024 to over \$811.62 million by 2037, highlighting both the medical and economic urgency of addressing this condition.

“An abundance of misinformation exists online, clouding next steps,” Palm adds. “Women deserve better.”

APOPS is committed to amplifying pelvic organ prolapse awareness, obliterating the stigma of vaginal, pelvic, and intimate health, and advocating for early detection and comprehensive care. The vision is a world in which POP screening is a standardized aspect of pelvic wellness checks and all women’s health stigma is eradicated.

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## About APOPS

The Association for Pelvic Organ Prolapse Support (APOPS) is a U.S.-based global nonprofit patient advocacy organization. APOPS leads the global charge to increase awareness and eradicate the stigma of pelvic organ prolapse and related symptoms.

Mission: To amplify POP awareness, acknowledge patient voice, destigmatize vaginal health,

encourage and optimize women's health empowerment,  
and quantify the quality-of-life impacts of POP.

Vision: A world where POP awareness and screening are standardized in pelvic wellness checks  
and vaginal health stigma evaporates.

Goals: Increase awareness, support women globally, bridge with stakeholders to evolve POP  
treatment, optimize standardized screening, ensure accurate  
data collection, and advance clinician POP curriculum.

Sherrie Palm

Association for Pelvic Organ Prolapse Support

+1 262-706-3177

sherriepalm.apops@gmail.com

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