

## IASAT Conference 2019: an impression

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### Introduction

IASAT is the International Association for the Study of Affective Touch, founded in 2015. September 11 – 13, 2019, the third international conference was held in Linköping, Sweden. Participants came from, among others, Sweden, Germany, Russia, Great Britain, France, Canada, USA, Australia, and – last but not least – The Netherlands.

It was a pleasure to find five other Dutch haptotherapists at the conference. Another participant was Adriaan Visser, researcher and editor-chief of the International Journal of Haptonomy and Haptotherapy (IJHH). I presented a poster and performed a data blitz presentation about my current research, titled: In touch again: haptotherapy for people with cancer; a survey among haptotherapists. Adriaan Visser had his own poster and blitz presentations on IJHH and Use and satisfaction of cancer patients following haptotherapy.

### The first day

The first day was rather tough. At high speed, researchers presented their fundamental research in neurosciences. As practising haptotherapists, we felt blown away by all kinds of scientific terms on rather too full slides, for example: CT-fibres and CT appropriate touch, A $\beta$ -neurons, SI and SII, names of brain regions, graphics and images. It became clear that for these researchers the concept of affective touch has a different meaning than for the haptotherapists. In this fundamental research, affective touch is the kind of touch that stimulates the CT-fibres (CT-appropriate touch). This is done by a standardized stroking the hairy forearm, with a soft brush, at a certain speed. In haptotherapy, however, affective touch has to do with contact, connectedness, and reciprocity.

### Following days

The second and third day, however, the presentations included more social applications. We stated that in the presented research there was only one-way traffic and no reciprocity between the person who touched and the one

who was being touched. Nevertheless, most presentations were really interesting. Topics were, for example: ADHD, autism, and several genetic neuro-diseases with very disabling symptoms. In fact, it has to be acknowledged that this order of the presentations led to a nice build-up.

The afternoon of the second day was reserved for a number of short (5 minutes) data blitz presentations, about all kinds of subjects. Time was guarded strictly, so researchers had to be to the point. According to my colleagues and the audience, my presentation was clear and we think the audience got some better idea of what haptotherapy is about, and why we call it affective touch.

At the end of the second day, two busses brought us to a magnificent old castle in Vadstena, a place near the Vättern lake, where we had a great dinner.

After the morning of the third day, again fully filled with presentations, the conference closed with a take away lunch. The main person of the Swedish organization remarked to me that, to his opinion, the presence and the input of the Dutch haptotherapists really added some valuable aspects to the conference.

### Next conference

The next IASAT conference will be held in 2021 in Marseille. I hope to have finished my next study (participatory observation and interviews with patients and haptotherapists) on time in order to apply for another presentation. I hope we will be there with even more haptotherapists, so I invite the readers of this journal to attend this conference, preferably with posters and presentations about their own research on haptotherapy.