

WCPT joins forces for policy summit on scope of practice

WCPT is joining with the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) to hold an international summit examining direct access and the scope of practice of physical therapists, how it is being extended, and what is driving changes to it.

The policy summit, entitled Direct Access and Advanced Scope of Practice in Physical Therapy will be held in Washington DC, USA on 22-24 October 2009. It will be especially relevant to those involved in policy, service development and negotiations with governments, as well as those implementing new service models and working in advanced practice domains.

The summit will provide an opportunity to share international experiences in developing and implementing policy in the areas of advanced scope of practice and direct access. A combination of high profile presenters, posters and discussion sessions will help to address key issues, such as how to develop, influence and implement policy changes, and how to advance scope of practice globally. A working group will also be formed to take forwards the outcomes from the summit.

“WCPT's Declaration of Principle on Autonomy clearly states that patients/clients should have direct access to physical therapist services,” says WCPT's Professional Policy Consultant, Tracy Bury. “However, that reality is not universal.” Member organisations in many countries or states have had to work strategically with national governments to introduce the policy following lengthy discussions and amendments to legislation.

Equally, it is up to each member organisation to determine with regulatory and legislative bodies what constitutes scope of physical therapy practice within that country.

“Many lessons have been learnt by WCPT's member organisations and professional leaders as they have strived to implement direct access and advance the scope of practice,” says Tracy Bury. “These can be shared with others needing to work strategically at a professional and political level to bring about change for the benefit of service users and the profession.”

WCPT hopes that the meeting will eventually result in a range of resources being developed to help member organisations negotiate and implement changes in both areas, and to inform policy development internationally.

More information is available at the summit's dedicated website:

<http://directaccesssummit.com>.