

## Anniversaries and aid work marked at NACR meeting



**The 21st Annual General Meeting of the North America Caribbean Region (NACR) was a special one this year, for various reasons. The host organisation the Surinaamse Vereniging voor Fysiotherapie (Suriname Physiotherapy Association) was marking its 40th birthday. Regional Chair Stacy de Gale reports.**

At this year's NACR meeting, we had reason to celebrate and rejoice in a few firsts. We were ably hosted by the Surinaamse Vereniging voor Fysiotherapie (SVF), which is an excellent example of how a physiotherapy association can be born, nurtured, and flourish as a result of active membership.

Delegates and physical therapists from Suriname, the Caribbean region and as far afield as Holland were treated to the sights, sounds and culinary delights of this beautiful country. As part of the celebrations, continuing education programmes were held simultaneously and facilitated by renowned experts in their fields: Marilyn Moffat, WCPT President; Dorine van Ravensberg of the Netherlands Paramedic Institute; and Rik Gosselink of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

The NACR meeting was attended by representatives of member organisations from Barbados, Bermuda, Canada, Curacao, Guyana, Panama, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and the USA.

And, for the first time, there were national representatives from Haiti - David Charles and Iven Louius. Assisted by the Canadian and American physical therapy associations, these physical therapists were able to attend, and actively participate in the proceedings.

The extent of the devastation and the urgency of the rehabilitative needs of the Haitian people were given even greater humanity due to the presence of these two physical therapists. This formed a major part of the agenda of our meeting. Thanks and praise continue to be poured out from the people of

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Haiti and our region to all those health professionals and volunteers who continue to provide relief and aid. Special mention must be made to the Health Volunteers Organization (HVO) and physical therapist Shaun Cleaver, who selflessly continue to provide rehabilitative support.

The WCPT President, Marilyn Moffat, and Secretary General, Brenda Myers, were welcomed, and their work was endorsed and supported by the region. The provision of a database of world-renowned professionals willing to provide continued professional development, the advent of physical therapy courses via the company Educata, and joining the World Health Professions Alliance were all lauded.

There were vigorous discussions surrounding rehabilitation in Haiti, direct access/patient self-referral, and branding of the profession. Issues from individual countries were also discussed, with possible solutions put forward. Participants were divided into groups to focus on WCPT policies and documents. Amendments and recommendations were made in preparation for the WCPT General meeting in Amsterdam in 2011.

