

Congress 2011: the ripples of knowledge begin to spread



Physical therapists in the main auditorium of the RAI conference centre in Amsterdam.

A total of 5,274 physical therapists from over a hundred countries came to Amsterdam for World Physical Therapy 2011, the WCPT Congress, last month. Over three days they had a choice of more than 140 sessions and the experience was, for some, life-changing.

"I have returned to work following this inspiring experience with renewed enthusiasm," said Pornratshanee Weerapong, a physical therapist from Thailand. "I have left all documents I collected from the congress in the staff coffee room, where my colleagues can have a look and chat about them, and have presented my experience at WCPT in our faculty meeting."

Priscillah Ondoga from Uganda said she had never before dreamed of attending a WCPT

Congress. "It's been amazing to actually meet some of the people I have read about, and whose papers I have read," she said. "Also, just to meet so many physical therapists from all over the world, to be able to exchange contacts and network. It's valuable not just for me. The information and contacts I collect will benefit every physical therapist in my country. It will help us develop our entry level programme."

Edward Gorgon from the Philippines said: "I value most the rich discussion on research. We are still struggling to develop our research knowledge and skills in the Philippines, so I will take this home and hope to inspire people."

These three physical therapists all received bursaries from the Royal Dutch Society for Physical Therapy (KNGF), providing them with funding that allowed them to attend the congress. In addition, financial assistance from the European and North America Caribbean Regions, the Australian Physiotherapy Association, the American Physical Therapy Association and WCPT assisted member organisations from low resource countries to be

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represented at the WCPT General Meeting and Congress.

Preliminary registration figures indicate that the largest number of delegates attending the congress came from, not surprisingly, the host country Netherlands (1,154). The next largest numbers of delegates came from the United Kingdom (370), the United States (355), Japan (285), Germany (277), Brazil (259), Canada (246), Switzerland (213), Australia (211) and Denmark (180).

At the closing ceremony, WCPT President Marilyn Moffat noted that it had been one of the largest and most successful congresses in WCPT's 60 year history.



General Meeting decides on review of WCPT regulations



Delegations from 96 member organisations across the world attended the General Meeting.

A record number of delegations attended the WCPT General Meeting, with physical therapy organisations from 96 countries represented. Here are some of the main decisions from WCPT's 16th General Meeting.

Review of Articles of Association

The next four years will see WCPT reviewing its Articles of Association, following the General Meeting's approval of a motion from the Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA).

WCPT's Articles of Association set down the conditions and regulations by which the organisation should be run. Changes to the wording of the part of the Articles dealing with the objectives of WCPT, proposed by the WCPT Executive Committee, were approved by delegates, updating some of the phraseology to reflect the development of the profession and WCPT.

Delegates also agreed to proposals from the APA that the Articles should be amended so that there could be consultation and voting by member organisations on matters of significance between General Meetings. In addition, delegates agreed that there should be a broader review of WCPT's Articles of Association "to ensure that they reflect best practice corporate governance standards and support contemporary business practices".

Policy papers review

The General Meeting approved the results of a review of WCPT policy papers, which was carried out during 2010 and 2011. The structure and names assigned to WCPT's policies have been changed, reflecting the increasing number and range of its outputs and the need to make them

accessible to a range of stakeholders. The new categories are: Articles of Association, ethical principles, policy statements, endorsements, guidelines, and briefing papers.

The existing position statements and declarations of principle have been edited to make their style consistent and their meaning clearer to all those involved with WCPT.

The General Meeting approved new policy statements on: direct access and patient/client self-referral to physical therapy; the consequences of armed violence, landmines and other weapons of war; occupational health and safety for physical therapists; records management; record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal; and regulation of the physical therapy profession. It also approved new endorsements of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

PEDro boost

The national physical therapy associations that make up WCPT have agreed to try and make an annual grant to the Physiotherapy Evidence Database (PEDro).

PEDro is an initiative of the Centre for Evidence-Based Physiotherapy at The George Institute for Global Health in Sydney, Australia. Delegates at the WCPT General Meeting spoke of how valuable the database was in furthering physical therapy education, research and practice around the world.

But the Australian Physiotherapy Association, proposing the motion, said its future was threatened because of lack of funding. The meeting agreed to a motion strongly recommending that all WCPT member organisations establish an annual grant to PEDro.

Rights of people with disabilities

Delegates also agreed to a motion from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) in the United Kingdom that WCPT should encourage the rights of people with disabilities to practise as physical therapists around the world.

"There are added strengths to having people with disabilities in our profession," said CSP Chair Ann Green. "They can offer a positive example to patients."

Support for Japan

The Japanese Physical Therapy Association (JPTA) gave a formal vote of thanks to the international physical therapy community for its support after the Japanese earthquake, tsunami and nuclear radiation leak. Speaking at the WCPT General Meeting, the association's delegate reported that 2,500 Japanese physical therapists have been evicted from their homes. The JPTA continues to provide them with support while organising rehabilitation for survivors of the disasters.

Data collection project

Delegates at the General Meeting participated in a workshop to guide them through the requirements of WCPT's common data set project, which is attempting to collect information about the physical therapy profession, its education, regulation and staffing practice. Earlier, delegates discussed some of the problems member organisations had responding to requests for information about the profession in their country. They agreed that it was essential that regularly updated material should be collected by member organisations and shared internationally.

Stanley Paris awarded WCPT's highest honour



Stanley Paris receives the Mildred Elson Award from WCPT President Marilyn Moffat at the 60th anniversary Gala Dinner.

The Mildred Elson Award, WCPT's highest honour, has been presented to Stanley Paris. Now President of the University of St Augustine for Health Sciences, Stanley Paris has been a driving force in the physical therapy profession across the world.

From New Zealand, where he earned his physical therapist entry-level qualification in the 1950s, to the United States of America where he currently lives and works, Stanley Paris has influenced the world of physical therapy through his writing, teaching, clinical practice, and advocacy efforts.

"His work has truly furthered the development of the physical therapy profession," said WCPT President Marilyn Moffat presenting him with the award, which honours sustained and continuous leadership over a career and a significant contribution to the development of physical therapy at an international level.

Receiving the award at the WCPT 60th anniversary Gala Dinner, Stanley Paris drew warm applause for his words. "What I've learned over the years," he said, "is that the gap between nations in terms of practice standards is narrowing. WCPT has helped place the international community of physical therapy on a more level platform."

The profession, he said, was under-appreciated, and what was needed was more research showing the long-term outcomes of physical therapy interventions – research that depended on the profession gaining full autonomy. "I'm convinced that with our increasing emphasis on wellness,

physical therapy is equal or better than medical and surgical care.”

“The future of our profession is very bright,” he said.

Stanley Paris was the founding Chairman of the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists, IFOMPT, and also its second President. He was the founder and President of the Orthopaedic Section of the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists. He founded the Journal of Manual and Manipulative Therapy.

“Over his career, Stanley has been as energetic in the pursuit of excellence as he has in his own many physical activities and adventures,” said Marilyn Moffat.

From a royal opening ceremony to a new WCPT song...



WCPT President Marilyn Moffat (left) and KNGF President Bas Eenhoorn (right) talk to Princess Margriet of the Netherlands after the opening ceremony.

Here are some of the highlights of World Physical Therapy 2011 in brief. You can read more by looking at issues of WCPT Congress News (www.wcpt.org/congress/news).

The opening moment

Time momentarily stood still on 20th June as Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of the Netherlands officially opened the 2011 WCPT Congress – 41 years after she opened the last such event to be held in Amsterdam. She inaugurated the congress by symbolically watering a tulip which magically blossomed into a flower of knowledge.

A colourful opening ceremony revolved around the themes of sharing knowledge, inspiring each other and having fun. The acrobatic act La Vizio gave a spectacular demonstration of the beauty and power of human form and movement. The KNGF President Bas Eenhoorn welcomed delegates, and Ann Moore, Chair of the International Scientific Committee, provided an overview of the programme.

Lorimer Moseley on pain

Lorimer Moseley, Professor of Clinical Neurosciences at the University of South Australia, provided a keynote address at the opening ceremony where he encouraged the profession to consider whether it needed to look more at the sensory inputs that could affect patients' perception of pain and other sensations – and not just physical inputs.

"Everything we do has the capacity to modulate neural representations in the brain," he said. "We need to engage the sensory system." He

encouraged physical therapists to understand more about the brain, and not to think “that the physical in physical therapy ends at the foramen magnum.”

Later in the congress, he took part in a focused symposium where he suggested that clinical practice had failed to keep up with dramatic changes in the understanding of pain and therapeutic approaches to it.

WCPT President calls for wider recognition of PT

Some physical therapists have to fight to get even the most basic of services to patients/clients, said Marilyn Moffat, WCPT President. “The profession is still struggling for recognition in many parts of the world,” she said. “There is still an immense amount to do.”

She said that the growing human and financial tolls of non-communicable or lifestyle-related diseases and conditions – such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – are global concerns.

“There needs to be wider acknowledgement of the contribution that physical therapists can make, and are making, to keeping populations healthy and reducing health costs,” she said.

“We all share the same commitment to making the lives of those we serve better.”

World PT Day success

Physical therapists from around the world are using World Physical Therapy Day on 8th September every year as an opportunity to promote the work of the profession and its value to communities and countries.

At a congress discussion session on World PT Day and how it might evolve, delegates heard that at least a third of WCPT’s member organisations had organised activities annually since the Confederation started producing support materials on its website in 2008.

Chris Okafor from the Nigerian Society of Physiotherapy described how activities have been organised every year since 2005 in all 37 state chapters of the society. Physical therapists have organised road walks, meetings and printed t-shirts.

“Knowledge of physiotherapy is so much higher as a result,” he said.

Delegates at the meeting discussed ways in which World PT Day might be developed in the future. It was suggested that WCPT might target its support and resources to countries where the profession was especially struggling for recognition.

Aid must be sustainable

The best way that physical therapists can deal with natural disasters is to look beyond the disaster, according to a Canadian physical therapist who has worked to build health facilities in Haiti before and after the earthquake that struck on 2010.

Shaun Cleaver, who coordinated rehabilitation services development at the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer (HAS) in Haiti, said that though disasters themselves presented development opportunities, they were “not the only or the best time for progress”.

He was speaking at the discussion session on how physical therapy projects can bring long-term sustainable benefits in conflict zones and disaster areas.

“The real challenge is to build strong systems everywhere,” he said. He pointed out that the earthquake left 100-200 people with spinal injuries, which gained global attention and resulted in emergency aid being flown in. Yet before and after the earthquake, 300 people a year had spinal injuries.

David Charles, also on the panel, was the only physical therapist on site at the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer clinic when the earthquake struck.

“We had a long list of challenges,” he said. “One was the lack of resources – professionals, equipment and finances. Then there was the problem of coordinating services. The third area was knowledge – there was little disaster preparedness in the professions, and we were young physical therapists.”

Najmuddin Helal, an Afghan who lost both legs as a result of a landmine blast before becoming a physical therapist, spoke of physical therapy in a war zone.

WCPT has set up a web page to assist member organisations in their efforts to raise funds to support physical therapists affected by recent natural disasters. Details of the appeals of Physiotherapy New Zealand and the Japanese Physical Therapy Association are available at www.wcpt.org/node/40764. There is also a dedicated area of the website with resources for those interested in disaster management: www.wcpt.org/node/36985

Closing ceremony

Many delegates remained at the congress to the very end, attending a closing ceremony that mixed fun, the announcement of the next venue for the WCPT Congress, abstract award presentations, speeches, and the audience joining in to a song about the WCPT Congress first performed by a professional singer at the opening ceremony.

New WCPT Executive Committee



The new WCPT Executive Committee. From left to right (back row): Mabel Yvonne Espinel Gonzalez, Johnny Kuhr, Sandra Thornhill, Joyce Mothabeng, Margot Skinner, (front row) Marilyn Moffat, Emma Stokes.

Marilyn Moffat was re-elected as WCPT President at the General Meeting, and will serve for the next four years. Emma Stokes was elected as the Vice President.

Marilyn Moffat is Professor at New York University Department of Physical Therapy, USA, owner of a private physical therapy practice in New York and an international lecturer and consultant. She has been WCPT President since 2007.

Emma Stokes is Senior Lecturer in Physiotherapy at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, and served as the WCPT Executive Committee Member for Europe between 2007 and 2011.

The two will be part of a new WCPT Executive Committee, announced at the General Meeting. The committee members are:

- Africa regional representative: Joyce Mothabeng
- Asia Western Pacific regional representative: Margot Skinner
- European regional representative: Johnny Kuhr
- North America Caribbean regional representative: Sandra Thornhill
- South America regional representative: Mabel Yvonne Espinel Gonzalez

The regional chairs are:

- Africa: Esther Munalula Nkandu
- Asia Western Pacific: Gillian Webb

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- Europe: Sarah Bazin
- North America Caribbean: Stacy de Gale
- South America: Reginaldo Antolin Bonatti

Singapore beckons!



The Singapore delegation at the General Meeting shortly before the announcement that their country will host the 2015 WCPT Congress.

The next WCPT Congress will be held in Singapore in 2015, hosted by the Singapore Physiotherapy Association.

This follows a full review and assessment of high quality and competitive bids. Start planning your trip to Asia in 2015, and keep updated with news about the forthcoming congress as it becomes available on the WCPT website.

WCPT recognises long-term contribution of chairs



Pictured at a subgroup reception after the General Meeting, Laetitia Dekker-Bakker (second left) and Jerry Klug, who both received recognition of service Awards for their service as subgroup chairs. With them are WCPT Secretary General Brenda Myers (left) and WCPT President Marilyn Moffat (right).

WCPT has honoured those who had served the Confederation over the past four years and for their commitment over many years.

Recognition of services awards were presented at the end of the WCPT General Meeting to all subgroup chairs. In addition, awards were presented to the following subgroup chairs, who were retiring after many years service to their organisations:

- Laetitia Dekker-Bakker of the International Federation of Sports Physical Therapy
- Karen Keith of the International Acupuncture Association of Physical Therapists
- Jerry Klug of the International Private Practitioners Association

Recognition of Service Awards were also presented to WCPT's regional chairs over the past four years:

- Esther Munalula Nkandu of Africa Region
- Savita Ravindra of Asia Western Pacific Region
- Sarah Bazin of European Region
- Stacey de Gale of North America Caribbean Region
- David Lopez Sanchez of South America Region

Outgoing Executive Committee members Sylvia Kambalmetore and Zola Dantile were also recognised for their contribution – Zola Dantile for two terms as EC Africa representative and one as Vice President.

WCPT celebrates 60 years with Gala Dinner and awards



Dignitaries and award winners at the Gala Dinner. From left to right: António M Fernandes Lopes, Yoriko Taguchi, Amélia Pasqual Marques, Margrit List, Doreen Moore, Marilyn Moffat, Eckhardt Boehle, Elisabeth Haase.

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy celebrated its first 60 years with a Gala Dinner at the Novotel in Amsterdam before the congress.

Guests and WCPT delegates from all over the world attended, many in national dress. Among those attending were three former WCPT Presidents: Doreen Moore (1970-74), Margrit List (1982-88) and David Teager (1995-1999).

The dinner marked the founding of WCPT in 1951 when a group of 15 delegates from 11 national physical therapy associations gathered for their first meeting in a room in a Copenhagen restaurant.

The WCPT Awards were presented at the dinner. These recognise outstanding international contributions to the profession and/or global health by physical therapists.

The winner of the Humanitarian Service Award, which recognises those who have improved people's lives through exceptional care, compassion, dedication and personal commitment, was Peta Ann Schmidt. She is a longstanding member of the South African Society of Physiotherapy who, the citation said, has continuously reached out beyond the confines of her paid employment to contribute time and services to not-for-profit causes.

International Service Awards were presented to those who had made a significant international contribution in the areas of physical therapy practice, education, research, and administration and development.

The awards were presented to: Eckhardt Boehle, Elisabeth Haase, António

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M Fernandes Lopes, Joyce Mothabeng, Ina Diener, Amélia Pasqual Marques, Yoriko Taguchi, Jill Boissonnault, Elizabeth Carrington, Olwen Finlay, Prudence Galley, Gwendolen Jull, Paul JM Helders and Ann Moore.

Awards for outstanding abstracts and presentations



Some of the winners of the awards for best papers, pictured after the congress closing ceremony.

Awards for the outstanding abstracts and presentations at the WCPT Congress were presented during the closing ceremony. Judging was based on a combined assessment of abstract and presentation quality.

There were awards for: best papers from each WCPT region, best research report platform, best research report poster discussion, best research report poster, best special interest platform, best special interest poster discussion and best special interest poster.

A number of WCPT subgroups also presented awards for outstanding abstracts and poster presentations in their clinical areas.

The award recipients were:

Nicole Hilburn (South Africa); Vyvienne M'kumbuzi (Rwanda); Conran Joseph (South Africa); Andrew Hirschhorn (Australia); Martin Mackey (Australia); Victoria Manning (United Kingdom); Marese Cooney (Ireland); George Fulk (United States of America); Kelly Brewer (Canada); Jefferson Cardoso (Brazil); Aline Scianni (Brazil); Deirdre Hurley (Ireland); Leanne Hassett (Australia); Michael McCaskey (Switzerland); Karen Koldewijn (Netherlands); Victoria Hood (United Kingdom); Karen Dodd (Australia); Lisbeth Eriksson (Sweden); Sophie Coleman (Australia); Isabel Lane (United Kingdom); Margaret Grant (Australia); Diana Jones (United Kingdom); Natalie Morris (Canada); Roger Allen (United States of America); Victoria Hood (United Kingdom); Sune Dandanell (Denmark); Victoria Moerchen (United States of America); Wan-Ju Chao (Taiwan).

A full listing of the awards can be found at: www.wcpt.org/congress/awards

New global health data available online from the WHO

The World Health Organization has launched a Global Health Observatory – a new web-based portal providing access to data and analyses for monitoring global health. It has also published its annual world health statistics reports, presenting the most recent statistics for WHO's 193 member states.

The Global Health Observatory data repository provides a single point of access to over 50 datasets on health topics including mortality, burden of diseases, non communicable diseases and their risk factors, the Millennium Development Goals (child nutrition, child health, maternal and reproductive health, immunisation, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected diseases, water and sanitation), health systems, environmental health, violence and injuries and equity. It can be found at www.who.int/research/en/

It also provides online access to WHO's annual summary of health-related data for its member states – the World Health Statistics reports for 2011. World Health Statistics 2011 has been compiled using publications and databases produced and maintained by the technical programmes and regional offices of WHO. Indicators have been included on the basis of their relevance to global public health, the availability and quality of the data, and the reliability and comparability of the resulting estimates.

Summit is an opportunity for PTs to demonstrate their contribution

World Physical Therapy Day is approaching – and this year it coincides with a world event of vital importance to physical therapists and their efforts to improve the impact of the profession on global health.

This September, just 11 days after World Physical Therapy Day, the United Nations will hold its first ever summit on non-communicable disease – only the second such meeting to focus on global disease. The summit, involving heads of state, is an official recognition that non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and cancer) are an increasing global health challenge. They already claim 35 million lives a year – around 60 per cent of deaths.

“For physical therapists, the official recognition that a global strategy is required to reduce this burden of disability and deaths is highly significant,” says WCPT President Marilyn Moffat. “The profession helps millions of people every year to prevent these conditions and their risk factors – most importantly obesity. They also manage their effects, along with the effects of aging, illness, accidents, and the stresses and strains of life.”

WCPT believes that the summit provides an opportunity for physical therapists around the world to use World Physical Therapy Day on 8th September to demonstrate the enormous contribution of physical therapy in countering non-communicable disease (NCDs).

The Confederation has a toolkit of materials that will help member organisations and individual physical therapists organise publicity and campaigns around this idea (www.wcpt.org/node/28728). This includes information sheets that point to facts and figures on particular areas of health, and research indicating the significant contribution that physical therapists can make. They cover the NCD areas of: child obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and, added this year, cancer.

The toolkit also includes a new article by WCPT President Marilyn Moffat, which can be freely reproduced in journals, magazines and publicity (www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/ads/WPTDay2011-B5-PTArticle.pdf).

Already, many member organisations are gearing up for World Physical Therapy Day. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in the UK, for example, is building on its “Move for Health” campaigns in previous years, and encouraging members to hold a “Workout at Work Day” on World Physical Therapy Day (<http://tinyurl.com/3f4xyyn>). The aim of the day is to promote exercise and wellbeing in the work environment and help employees to become more active during their working day. The CSP will also use the day to highlight the business benefits of having a fit, healthy and physically active workforce.

Meanwhile, the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), of which WCPT is a member, is concerned that the recommendations it submitted to be considered by those attending the UN summit have not been taken account

of.

The WHPA brings together the global organisations representing the world's dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists and physicians and speaks for more than 26 million health care professionals in more than 130 countries. In June it made a number of recommendations to the United Nations, in anticipation of the summit on NCDs, in the expectation that they would be included in a "draft outcomes" document sent to all representatives of nations (missions) attending the summit.

However, WHPA believes the draft outcomes document that was sent out was "brief, fragmented and, in our view, lacks focus and a clear statement of actions, steps and priorities".

The WHPA has sent a letter to missions to the United Nations expressing its "deep concern" about this. It asks missions to support its original, and overlooked, recommendations, which were to:

- adopt a holistic approach based on common NCD risk factors;
- not restrict the scope of the outcomes document to a limited number of diseases, but to include other areas, notably mental health and oral health;
- focus on equitable access to health care as a human right and address the dramatic disparities within and between countries;
- address the link between NCDs and the broader social factors that influence behaviour and associated health risks (including the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age);
- strengthen health care systems through a comprehensive approach that places emphasis on primary health care and integrates prevention, specialised treatment and rehabilitation.

The WHPA is preparing a toolkit to help professionals educate the public about NCDs, which will be available shortly.

How can services for disabled people be supported, asks WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched its long-awaited world report on disability. It presents evidence about what works to overcome barriers to health care, rehabilitation, education and employment for people with disabilities, and what can be done to support services and create the environments which will enable people with disabilities to flourish.

WCPT is now considering the findings and their implications, and inviting member organisations, regions and subgroups to read the report and provide feedback to the WCPT secretariat.

The report recommends that governments and their development partners provide people with disabilities access to all mainstream services, invest in specific programmes and services for those people with disabilities who are in need, and adopt a national disability strategy and plan of action. In addition, governments should work to increase public awareness and understanding of disability, and support further research and training in the area. It says that people with disabilities should be consulted and involved in the design and implementation of these efforts.

WCPT representatives are listed on the report as being advisors and they were involved in the consultation process providing comments on the draft report, particularly the rehabilitation section. However, the report reflects input from a wide audience and WCPT does not necessarily endorse all findings.

The report says there needs to be more human resources for rehabilitation around the world. But many countries currently inadequately monitor their current workforce, and sometimes the workforce is inappropriately trained, says the report, which was launched in New York on 10 June.

The report draws attention to unmet need, quoting a 2006 study in Tonga, which found that although 20% of people with disabilities needed physiotherapy, only 6% received it. It also points to examples of good practice, such as rehabilitation service strengthening and improvement of physiotherapy infrastructure in Gujarat, India, following the 2001 earthquake.

The report recommends improving the human resources available for rehabilitation by establishing strategies to build training capacity and, in countries where specialist rehabilitation personnel are in short supply, develop training for different types of rehabilitation personnel.

It also recommends a wider adoption of the ICF (the International Classification of Functioning and Health) and improvements in national disability statistics. In the field of educating children with disabilities, the report recommends making available speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy to learners with moderate or significant disabilities.

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The world report on disability is available for free download from the WHO website at www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/. The summary report is also available in all UN languages, in Braille formatted copy, in accessible pdf and in EasyRead.

Can physical therapists rise to the challenge of new technologies?



The panel of speakers at the discussion panel on new technologies.

Physical therapists have been slow adopters of new technologies – and must learn to overcome common barriers and concerns if their patients are ultimately to benefit. This was one of the key messages from a panel of experts in a discussion panel on new information technologies at the WCPT Congress in Amsterdam.

At the session, where members of the audience were encouraged to give their thoughts and experiences, delegates discussed some of the reasons why social networking (such as Facebook and Twitter), blogs, e-learning, and “wikis” had not been embraced more wholeheartedly by physical therapists and their managers, given the potential benefits for spreading expertise and patient education.

They raised important issues such as: concerns over privacy and patient confidentiality; the lack of academic rigour in much internet information; professional resistance to change; the dull experience of many e-learning packages; institutional/employer resistance to professionals spending time on social networks.

Rachael Lowe, a UK physiotherapist who works independently as a specialist in providing technology solutions to the profession, said that e-learning provides a valuable opportunity for the profession to progress faster than it has in the past. Technology also provides opportunities for physical therapists to pool knowledge, share ideas and promote the profession.

But physical therapists also need to address the issues of how to remain professional online, and how to assess the information they find.

“We need to be more engaged,” said Rachael Lowe, who set up the open professional resource Physiopedia (www.physio-pedia.com). “We’re not a tech savvy profession, but we are getting there.”

Lisa Harvey, Associate Professor at the University of Sydney, Australia, who has developed e-learning material for physical therapists on spinal cord injury, agreed that the potential of e-learning for the profession was huge. “We’re going to find the care of our patients is going to lift worldwide,” she said.

“We need resources to implement technologies, and we need to change mindsets and educate people how to use technology for professional growth,” she said. “We also need ethical guidelines on how we should use these techniques.”

Eugene Mutimura from Rwanda is Director of Research and Professional Scientific Capacity Building at the Women’s Equity in Access to Care and Treatment of HIV infection in Kigali. He said mobile phone technology in particular helped centres interact with other centres, and connected health professionals to experts quickly through telehealth. The practical applications of internet-based communications, such as Skype, could be limited in African countries because of technical problems with connectivity and bandwidth, he said. However, the exchange of information enabled by new technologies had a more profound effect on professions and their growth in developing countries than in developed countries.

Neil Pakenham-Walsh, co-ordinator of the Healthcare Information for All by 2015 (HIFA2015) campaign and co-director of the Global Healthcare Information Network, stressed the importance of new technologies for providing healthcare information to low and middle income countries. The publication of research and open access journals over the internet could have an important impact on professional development.

“We must use information technology to connect all the different parties – professionals, patients and decision makers. We need everyone to be in the same room, and we need support networks which help all these groups to understand each other.”

Neil Pakenham-Walsh is calling on all physical therapists to join the HIFA2015 campaign. You can find out more at www.hifa2015.org

Other useful links related to the debate:

Physical therapy “wikipedia”
www.physio-pedia.com

Sharing physical therapy exercises
www.physiotherapyexercises.com

International networks
www.scipt.org

E-learning
www.webducate.net

Practice makes perfect in stroke rehabilitation regimens



Delegates listen to focused symposium speakers in the spectacular Elysium conference hall.

There is considerable evidence that the amount of time spent practising tasks after stroke is directly related to rehabilitation outcome. This was a key theme at a focused symposium on stroke rehabilitation, held at the WCPT Congress in Amsterdam in June.

Delegates heard that what was important was not so much the amount of time a person spent practising tasks with affected limbs, but the number of repetitions they achieved. This means that devices that aid repetition in shorter periods, such as robots, can be of genuine value.

Catherine Dean, Director and Head of Physiotherapy Program at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, said that reviews had indicated the value of constrained movement. But it was practice, not just the constraint, that was important.

Devices like treadmills enabled constrained movements of the lower limbs to be repeated again and again, especially if they provided body weight support. Walking with a patient up and down a gym was unlikely to be as effective, and it was too labour intensive for the physical therapist.

People's workstations could be adapted so that they could also perform repetitions. "There's nothing magic about this," she said. "It's just to do with practice, and it is far more likely to give people independence in walking."

"There isn't any magic apparatus: it's just that it facilitates our practice." Doing exercises in groups had the advantage of providing competition and co-operation.

The speakers also discussed robotic rehabilitation devices on the market. Gert Kwakkel, Chair of neurorehabilitation at the VU University Medical

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Centre in Amsterdam, said that an analysis of randomised controlled trials on rehabilitation of upper limbs using robotics showed 7% gains in arm scores.

“This suggests that they are very effective,” he said. “However, it may not be the type of robotics but the intensity that is in favour of this equipment.”

“It’s the dose that is important, not the type, so I would always get the cheapest type of robotics you can find on the market.”

He pointed out that although it was clear that more practice meant better results, there was no good protocol available for dose-response trials.

“The key message from randomised controlled trials is that everyone improves with practice, so can we influence this pattern by speeding up the improvement?”

What does advanced practice really mean?

Advanced practice in physical therapy could mean added value to patients and health service managers, delegates heard at a discussion panel at the WCPT Congress. But there is a lack of understanding by the public, and an international lack of consensus about what advanced practice really means.

Sue Greenhalgh is a consultant physical therapist for musculo- skeletal services in Bolton, the UK. Her team of non-medical prescribers was introduced to reduce orthopaedic surgery waiting times. There is now evidence that their interventions result in less surgery, more non-surgical management, and greater satisfaction from patients because of the time and care they receive.

But the speakers from Canada, Australia, Korea and the UK revealed that what constitutes advanced practice and “extended scope” in physical therapy varies greatly from country to country.

Session chair Jon Warren, ex-President of the New Zealand Society of Physiotherapists, said: “If you think we’re confused about the nomenclature, then I don’t know what the public are thinking.”

“When people are told they are going to see an extended scope practitioner, they think they are going to have something stuck down their throats.”

Delegates also discussed the potential greater use of assistants in the future, as physical therapists became more specialised.

Eight new members for WCPT



WCPT's new members line up with WCPT President Marilyn Moffat during the General Meeting.

The number of WCPT member organisations is now 106, with the physical therapy associations from Argentina, Macau, Mauritius, Pakistan, Paraguay, Ukraine, Oman and Slovakia officially admitted to membership at the WCPT General Meeting in Amsterdam in June.

The names of the organisations are:

- Asociación Argentina de Kinesiología
- Macau Physical Therapists Association
- Association des Kinesithérapeutes of Mauritius
- Pakistan Physical Therapy Association
- Association of Physiotherapists and Kinesiology of Paraguay
- Ukranian Association of Physical Therapy
- Omani Physiotherapy Association
- Slovak Chamber of Physiotherapists

In addition, the new association in Belgium, Axxon, was recognised as a new member organisation to replace the previous organisation, providing continuity of membership.

Five new specialist organisations join WCPT

Five specialist physical therapy organisations were accepted as new WCPT subgroups at the General Meeting in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in June.

The new subgroups are:

- International Association of Physical Therapists in Animal Practice (IAPTAP)
- International Confederation of Cardiorespiratory Physical Therapists (ICCrPT)
- International Neurological Physical Therapy Association (INPA)
- International Organization of Physical Therapists in Mental Health (IOPTMH)
- International Society for Electrophysical Agents in Physical Therapy (ISEAPT)

WCPT's seven existing subgroups were reconfirmed, bringing the total number of WCPT subgroups to 12.

WCPT NEWS

July 2011