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Leaders of the world's health professions step up their support for professional self regulation

Geneva, Switzerland, 19 May 2008 – At the first-ever inter-professional and international conference on the regulation of health professionals, more than 500 dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physicians, physical therapists and government officials debated the critical importance of professional regulation as essential to safe, quality patient care. The conference was convened by the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)* in collaboration with the World Confederation for Physical Therapy.

The two-day conference highlighted the fact that professional self-regulation was under more scrutiny than ever before in many countries, and that often national health professional associations were not being consulted. Discussion also focused on the impact of international trade in services agreements and the increasing cross-border movement of both patients and health professionals.

Hiroko Minami, President of the International Council of Nurses: “International trade in services agreements impact the public and health professionals and it is important that health professional associations be consulted by governments prior to and during negotiations, whether regional, bilateral or global. It is critical that ministries of health be part of any negotiations concerning health and the health professions.”

Burton Conrod, President of the FDI World Dental Federation: “We expect the health professions as well as the public to play a major role whenever professional regulation is under discussion. We are confident that self-regulation offers the most effective way of protecting the public. There is no evidence to demonstrate that other models are any better.”

Jon Snaedal, President of the World Medical Association: “It is no coincidence that at a time when there is a shortage of health professionals around the world self-regulation is being challenged by governments. Limiting the freedom of health professions to self regulate should not be seen by governments as a way of solving the problem.”

Marilyn Moffat, President of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy: “The WHPA will build on this highly successful conference by providing information and tools for national health professional associations to strengthen self-regulation and consult with their governments. The World Confederation for Physical Therapy and the International Council of Nurses have already produced model practice acts relating to regulation that can be used as guides.”

Kamal Midha, President of the International Pharmaceutical Federation: “The WHPA will now consider holding another similar conference to follow up the issues we heard this weekend. The public needs to be aware that self-regulation is an effective way of stimulating good practice and preventing poor practice in the interests of the patient.”

The full recording of the conference will also be available via the WHPA website 19 May 2008.

* The World Health Professions Alliance, speaking for more than 23 million health care professionals worldwide, assembles essential knowledge and experience from the key health care professions. The WHPA aims to facilitate collaboration between key health professionals and major international stakeholders such as governments, policy makers and the World Health Organization.

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Editor's note

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***World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)** (www.whpa.org)

The World Health Professions Alliance brings together dentistry, medicine, nursing, and pharmacy through their representative international organisations, the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the World Dental Federation (FDI) and the World Medical Association (WMA) and represents more than 20 million health professionals worldwide.

- The **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of 131 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses since 1899, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.
- The **International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)** is the global federation of the national organisations of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists. Pharmacists are health professionals dedicated to improving the access to and value of appropriate medicine use.
- The **World Dental Federation (FDI)** is the authoritative, worldwide voice of dentistry with more than 150 member associations in 134 countries around the world, representing more than 900,000 dentists internationally.
- The **World Medical Association (WMA)** is the global federation of national medical associations, representing the millions of physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of physicians and patients, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical science, education, ethics and health care for all people.
- The **World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT)** is a non-profit organisation comprising 101 member organisations, together representing more than 300,000 physical therapists worldwide. The Confederation works to improve global health by encouraging high standards of physical therapy research, education and practice; supporting communication and exchange of information