

Press release

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For immediate release

Beating obesity: physical therapists are the experts

Physical therapists (also known as physiotherapists) have a vital role to play in combating the worldwide obesity crisis. As exercise experts, they prevent and successfully treat burgeoning “diseases of civilization”, which also include heart disease, stroke, diabetes and respiratory problems caused by smoking.

Yet in some countries, the physical therapy profession is struggling for recognition, and the profession’s skills are being under-utilised in keeping populations healthy.

This is the message of Marilyn Moffat, President of the profession’s global body The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), speaking in advance of World Physical Therapy Day on 8th September.

Dr Moffat, who is Professor of Physical Therapy at New York University, says that as exercise experts, physical therapists can provide irrefutable data showing that their prescriptions of exercise and physical activity are effective in combating the diseases that can arise because of inactivity, poor diet and twenty-first century lifestyles.

“These exercise prescriptions are aimed, first and foremost, at preventing the problems,” she says, “but when disease is diagnosed, they can provide treatment and preclude some of the often devastating consequences of conditions like heart and lung disease, stroke and diabetes.”

“Physical therapists around the world work with patients and clients to find the most appropriate types of aerobic conditioning/endurance training and resistance/strength training exercises to reduce the ever-increasing health care costs resulting from diseases of civilization.”

For more information, contact your national physical therapy organisation (see <http://www.wcpt.org/membership/members/index.php>), see attached background information, or email Simon Crompton at news@wcpt.org

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Background information

About obesity

Around 350 million people are obese worldwide. Physical activity is one of the best means of countering obesity.

Children and young people under the age of 18 need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day to promote and maintain health. Adults need 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 5 days a week, or 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity 3 days a week to maintain health. Plus they need to do muscle strengthening exercises at least twice a week.

About physical therapy

Physical therapists are experts in developing and maintaining people's ability to move and function throughout their lives. With an advanced understanding of how the body moves and what keeps it from moving well, they promote wellness, mobility and independence. They treat and prevent many problems caused by pain, illness, disability and disease, sport and work related injuries, ageing and long periods of inactivity.

Physical therapists are educated over several years, giving them a full knowledge of the body's systems and the skills to treat a wide range of problems. This education is usually university-based, at a level that allows physical therapists to practice independently. Continuing education ensures that they keep up to date with the latest advances in research and practice. Many physical therapists are engaged in research themselves.

More detailed information about what physical therapists do can be found in WCPT's Description of Physical Therapy at www.wcpt.org/publications/docs.php.

About World Physical Therapy Day

World Physical Therapy Day falls on 8th September every year, and is an opportunity for physical therapists from all over the world to raise awareness about their crucial role in keeping people well, mobile and independent. The day was established by WCPT in 1996.

About the World Confederation for Physical Therapy

WCPT is the profession's global body representing over 300,000 physical therapists/physiotherapists in 101 countries. For more information go to www.wcpt.org.