World Physiotherapy Day: Join the movement and reap the benefits

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Thursday 8 September marks World Physiotherapy Day and provides a unique opportunity to recognise the vital role that physiotherapists play in supporting Australians of all ages to live to their full potential.

Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) President Melissa Locke stated that “Physiotherapy is one of the faster growing professions in Australia. In the last 20 years we have seen the number of university courses grow by over three hundred per cent.”

There are now over 20 twenty courses across the country and in 2011 over one thousand new physiotherapists will graduate and join the 22 000 registered physiotherapists. This growth in the number of physiotherapists is in response to huge demand for their services.

“People often associate physiotherapists with sporting injuries, and while they are highly skilled at working with sports people, they also have an important role in treating and managing a range of other conditions, whether acquired at birth, through accident, ill-health or age,” stated Ms Locke.

The APA is keen to see the scope of physiotherapy practice more widely recognised and appreciated by the general public. This is particularly important in light of Australia’s ageing population, spiralling rates of obesity and increasing levels of disability.

“Physiotherapy involves a holistic approach to the prevention, diagnosis, and management of disorders of movement or optimisation of function to enhance the health and wellbeing,” says Ms Locke.

“Physiotherapists work with people across the age range from children who have developmental problems or are overweight, to adults with chronic disease or injury, and on to older people at risk of falls or stroke.

“Physiotherapists are involved in providing guidance, motivation and education, along with assisting people to manage their own conditions and symptoms. This is in addition to the crucial role physiotherapists play in the management of conditions that affect the bones and muscles, such as arthritis, back and neck pain, osteoporosis, joint replacements, and urinary incontinence.

“Australian physiotherapists are world leaders in the areas of clinical and professional practice. “Australians were pioneers in facilitating direct public access to physiotherapists, back in the 1970’s – a model which is the envy of many other countries,” said Ms Locke.

In October this year, the APA will hold its biennial national conference in Brisbane where some 2000 physiotherapists will converge to discuss cutting-edge research on a broad range of topics from incontinence and barefoot running to neurology and paediatric physiotherapy.

Physiotherapists are experts in helping people to develop and maintain the ability to move and function throughout their lifespan. With an advanced understanding of the body’s systems, how it moves and what keeps it from moving well, physiotherapists promote wellness, mobility and independence.
About World Physiotherapy Day

World Physiotherapy Day falls on 8 September every year and is an opportunity for physiotherapists from all over the world to raise awareness about the crucial role their profession plays in making and keeping people well, mobile and independent. The day was established in 1996, by the World Confederation for Physiotherapy – the profession’s global body representing over 300,000 physiotherapists in 101 countries.

Physiotherapy has been practiced in Australia for over 100 years, and the organisation that became the APA was established in 1906. The APA is a founding member of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy, which celebrates its 60 birthday 2011.

Contact: Jonathon Kruger (03) 9092 0888