

Press release

26th August 2010

For immediate release

Physical therapists' unique role in healthy ageing

The contribution of physical therapists (known in many countries as physiotherapists) to the health of aging adults is unique but under-recognised, according to the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT). More than any other profession, physical therapists prevent and treat chronic disease and disability in aging adults through prescribed activity and movement.

According to the World Health Organization, the proportion of people aged over 60 years is growing faster than any other age group in almost every country. Physical therapists can help them stay healthy and independent, and can improve the health of those with chronic health problems, by teaching them how to exercise safely and effectively.

The World Health Organization encourages regular physical activity for older adults, because it has been shown to improve their functional status and quality of life. Authoritative research shows that participation in regular exercise programmes leads to older adults having greater functional capabilities, more independence, fewer illnesses and improved quality of life.

"Activity has to be introduced carefully if a person is unfit, older, or has a chronic disease," says Marilyn Moffat, President of WCPT. "That's where physical therapists come in. They examine the person, recommend exercises that are safe and appropriate for them, and educate them about how to look for signs of trouble. Physical therapy has a major contribution to make globally in keeping people healthy, fit and well."

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

Background information

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 practise 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 on WCPT's website:

<http://www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-B1-AboutPhysicalTherapy.doc>

http://www.wcpt.org/description_of_physical_therapy

About the impact of physical therapy on problems associated with ageing

Research has shown that the type of exercise and training prescribed by physical therapists can reduce:

- risk of falls
- functional decline
- cardiovascular disease, such as heart disease and stroke
- blood pressure
- osteoarthritis
- osteoporosis
- depression
- anxiety

... and improve

- balance
- strength
- coordination and motor control
- joint health
- flexibility
- endurance

- independence
- quality of life.

More details are available in resource materials on the WCPT website:

http://www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-Active_Aging_C4.pdf

<http://www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-B5-PTArt2010.pdf>

http://www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-C2-Cardiovascular_disease.pdf

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, and marks the date on which WCPT was founded.

About the World Confederation for Physical Therapy

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