

Press release

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For immediate release

Physical therapists are key players in global disease

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy is calling for wider recognition that physical therapists (known in many countries as physiotherapists) are the movement and exercise experts who can be central in the battle against obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and cancer. This is in the light of a major United Nations summit on non-communicable diseases taking place in New York on 19th and 20th September.

“They are a resource that should never be overlooked,” says WCPT President Marilyn Moffat.

The UN summit meeting will address ways of preventing and controlling non-communicable diseases worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for global mortality, causing 3.2 million deaths annually, and physical activity can reduce non-communicable diseases.

Physical therapists maximise people’s movement potential, promoting fitness and identifying the limitations that prevent them from being as active and independent as they might be. So it is clear that the profession has a major part to play, according to Marilyn Moffat.

“Activity has to be introduced carefully if a person is overweight, unfit, older, or has a chronic disease,” says Marilyn Moffat. “Physical therapists do this by examining a person, recommending safe and appropriate exercises, and educating them about how to look for signs of trouble. This makes PTs the ideal professionals to prescribe exercise programmes.”

For more information, contact your national physical therapy organisation (see www.wcpt.org/members), see the article at www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/ads/WPTDay2011-B5-PTArticle.pdf, or email Simon Crompton at news@wcpt.org.

Background information

About physical therapy

Physical therapists (known in many countries as physiotherapists) 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:
www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-B1-AboutPhysicalTherapy.doc
www.wcpt.org/description_of_physical_therapy

About the impact of physical therapy on non-communicable disease

More details are available in resource materials on the WCPT website:
www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-C2-Cardiovascular_disease.pdf
www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-C1-Child_obesity.pdf
www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-C3-Diabetes.pdf
www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay11_Cancer_Fact_sheet_C6.pdf
www.wcpt.org/sites/wcpt.org/files/files/WPTDay-Active_Aging_C4.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 350,000 physical therapists/physiotherapists from member organisations in 106 countries. For more information go to www.wcpt.org