

Press release

30th April 2015

Physical therapists at the heart of Nepal relief efforts

As the World Confederation for Physical Therapy's congress opens in Singapore, it is calling on delegates to support the efforts of physical therapists and other health professionals in providing immediate and long-term rehabilitation, aids and equipment to the victims of the Nepal earthquake.

Its appeal follows the WCPT General Meeting in Singapore – and a standing ovation for the Nepal delegate who managed to attend, despite the traumatic circumstances that hit his home and family just days before the meeting began.

There are 900 physical therapists in Nepal, and they are volunteering throughout the affected areas, travelling to the hospitals where injured people are being taken.

Many physical therapists specialising in disaster management who were due to attend the WCPT Congress, have instead flown to Nepal to provide their expertise. Among them is Peter Skelton, a British physical therapist who is a Project Manager with relief organisation Handicap International. He was due to speak on the role of physical therapists in disaster management at the congress – a session (to be held on Sunday at 8.30am) which now holds an added relevance.

Also due to be attending, but instead offering expertise in Nepal, is Michel Landry, Division Chief of the Doctor of Physical Therapy Programme at Duke University, USA – who on Thursday (30th May) was honoured with a WCPT International Service Award for his humanitarian work in disaster and post-conflict zones.

Nishchal Ratna Shakya, a physiotherapist and lecturer at Kathmandu University School of Medical Sciences says he was still trembling inside when he arrived in Singapore for the WCPT meeting. "It's been important for me to come to get as much support as possible," he said. "I never thought that so many people would be aware of what was happening in Nepal and was completely overwhelmed when I walked in the hall and everyone stood."

Nishchal was at home in Kathmandu with his family when the earthquake struck on Saturday, and he and his father rushed to his 4-month old baby's room to protect her from debris with their bodies. "We felt we were being thrown room to room, vertically and horizontally, and this terrible sound made you immediately feel very fearful. Your mind doesn't work properly and you don't know what to do.

Since that moment Nishchal, who is President of the Nepal Physiotherapy Association, has been trying to co-ordinate the physical therapy response in Nepal. "I was trying to channel the physiotherapy team on Facebook as the building was trembling," he said.

At the end of the WCPT General Meeting, Gillian Webb, Chair of WCPT's Asia Western Pacific Region, announced that WCPT was supporting the Handicap International emergency appeal for Nepal. "WCPT has worked with Handicap International on a number of initiatives," she said, "and we are encouraging physical therapists to make contributions. Any currency will be accepted."

About the appeal

You can donate to the Handicap International appeal via their website <http://donate.handicap-international.org.uk/give/nepal-earthquake/>

For more information go to

<http://www.handicap-international.org.uk>

Further information about the WCPT General Meeting and the WCPT Congress 2015 that follows it can be found at <http://www.wcpt.org/congress>

Please contact Simon Crompton if you have specific queries: scrompton@wcpt.org

Note to WCPT member organisations

Please use this information in your magazine, journal, newsletter or social media channels. It may also be forwarded to your local or national media.

