Physical therapy services for older people

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) advocates for member organisations to work with legislative and regulatory bodies and service providers to incorporate the following principles into their national planning and programmes for older people.¹

- Physical therapists with appropriate knowledge and experience should be actively involved in developing policy and planning relating to services for older people at local, national and international levels.
- Prompt and coordinated services, including promotion, prevention, treatment/intervention and rehabilitation, provided by physical therapists should be available and accessible to older people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, limitations in their ability to function optimally.
- Physical therapy services for older people who live at home, such as home physical therapy and out-patient physical therapy clinics should be available as an alternative to high cost hospital or institutional care.
- Physical therapy services should be available for all older people regardless of their circumstances. Particular regard should be shown to those who do not have direct access to conventional services, for example older people in rural areas.
- Services for older people should be extended to people with characteristics of ageing acquired at a chronologically earlier age than the general population, regardless of the age at which “older person” is defined.

Glossary

Older people — are generally defined according to a range of characteristics including: chronological age, change in social role and changes in functional abilities. In high-resourced countries older age is generally defined in relation to retirement from paid employment and receipt of a pension, at 60 or 65 years. With increasing longevity some countries define a separate group of oldest people, those over 85 years. In low-resourced situations with shorter life-spans, older people may be defined as those over 50 years. The age of 50 years was accepted as the definition of older people for the purpose of the WHO Older Adult Health and Ageing in Africa project.¹

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## Approval, review and related policy information

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### References


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