



Press release

For immediate release

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WCPT Congress wins Incredible Impacts award

The WCPT Congress 2017 in Cape Town has won an Incredible Impacts award for its range of outstanding legacy activities that have benefitted Africa and the wider community.

The award, given by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and BestCities was announced at the ICCA Congress in Prague this week, where Tracy Bury, WCPT's Director of Professional Policy, was able to share WCPT's story and inspire others. The award celebrates the value of professional meetings which go beyond tourism, including a grant of \$7,500 for legacy activities at future congresses.

The WCPT Congress was recognised for funding bursaries, raising money for community exercise programmes, and developing partnerships which promoted physical activity in schools, as well as its commitment to knowledge translation.

The WCPT Congress in Cape Town – the first year the event has been held in Africa –included a fundraising drive to bring the 'Gift of Congress' to delegates who would otherwise have been unable to attend. Sixteen physical therapists and two students attended for the entirety of the three-day event, in an experience which has subsequently been described as career and life changing.

"We at WCPT are immensely proud of the Congress legacy," says WCPT President Emma Stokes. "We are grateful to our partners and all the members of the global physiotherapy community who contributed to ensure the success of the initiatives.

"The Gift of Congress bursaries supported delegates from low-resource countries and in turn they have returned home to make a difference. In addition, a quarter of the total delegates were from Africa, with an incredible 158% increase in abstract submissions from South Africa."

The award recognises WCPT's partnerships with the South African Society of Physiotherapy (SASP) and the Western Cape on Wellness (WoW!) programme, whose activities enable the public to get involved with initiatives to promote physical activity. SASP is now working to expand these initiatives more widely in South Africa.

“It was an honour to host such a prestigious event,” says Ina Diener, SASP President during the Congress. “The excitement can still be felt within the physiotherapy community in South Africa. The experience was extremely special and we hope that it will remain one of the most memorable WCPT Congresses. The legacy, with the WoW! project, Shoes2Move and “Brainbreak” competition will live on for many years to come.”

The WoW! and Shoes2Move campaign raised funds to buy exercise shoes for people unable to afford them, allowing them to begin exercising and developing healthier lifestyles.

WCPT promoted these messages on the Congress website, in mailings and at the opening ceremony, culminating in a joyous celebration with more than 1,000 therapists dancing in support at the Congress closing ceremony.

The South African Society of Physiotherapy also supported physical activity in South African schools by promoting the ‘Brainbreak’ competition in which Western Cape schools designed their own movement breaks to music. Winners were announced at the Congress closing ceremony, with children and teachers in attendance to receive accolades and prizes including physical activity equipment.

The Incredible Impacts award follows the ‘Best Conference Organiser’ award at the 2016 Singapore Tourism Awards, where the WCPT Congress 2015 was recognised for exceptional achievements in delivering excellence.

For further information please contact:

Mia Lockner, mlockner@wcpt.org

+44 (0)20 7931 6465

About the WCPT Congress

The WCPT Congress is a biennial event and the largest international gathering of physical therapists meeting to share the latest advances in education, practice, research and policy, to make a difference to global health. The WCPT Congress 2017 was the first in the confederation’s new two-yearly cycle (previously held every four years) and the first to be held in Africa. WCPT’s member organisation in South Africa, the South African Society of Physiotherapy (SASP), were the local hosts for the event.