WCPT’s declaration of intent

WCPT is moving physical therapy firmly into the twenty first century for this year’s Vancouver General Meeting, with the Executive Committee putting forward additions and revisions to the Confederation’s declarations of principle and position statements.

The last time there was a substantive review of these important documents was in 1995. “Since 2003, all the statements have been reviewed and revised to ensure that language and content is consistent across all the statements, and content has kept pace with developments in the profession and healthcare delivery,” says Brenda Myers, WCPT Secretary General.

The WCPT Executive Committee is recommending acceptance of new declarations on standards of practice, relationships with health professionals, physical therapists as exercise experts and female genital mutilation. It is proposing several other motions – perhaps most importantly seeking the adoption of new guidelines for physical therapist entry level education, and new physical therapy standards of practice. It is also proposing a change of wording to the articles of association to clarify which national physical therapy organisations can become WCPT Member Organisations.

Full information about the motions is now available via the WCPT website. This will be the first WCPT General Meeting for which Member Organisations and their delegates can prepare via the website. Using special password-protected areas they can download a range of papers providing background to the motions if they wish. Member Organisations are being encouraged to register their delegates for the General Meeting via the website before the deadline of 28 February.

Papers can be sent out to Member Organisations in hard copy form on request. Contact info@wcpt.org if you are having any problems.
An amazing 2218 abstracts have been submitted for presentation at this year’s WCPT Congress in Vancouver. They have all been reviewed and the International Scientific Committee is now considering them.

The breakdown of abstracts submitted for review, by Region, is: Africa 47, Asia Western Pacific 601, Europe 776, North America Caribbean 641, South America 138. There were 15 submissions from physical therapists who did not belong to a WCPT Member Organisation.

Notice will be sent to all individuals who submitted abstracts advising whether their presentation has been accepted by 31 January. Authors will be required to confirm their intention to present at the Congress and register/pay by 28 February.

The next registration deadline is for the early bird registration fee which ends on 28 February.

Key disability figure steps down at WHO

Federico Montero, Coordinator of the World Health Organization’s Disability and Rehabilitation Team, is stepping down at the end of February. The WHO is looking for a successor, who will help the organisation spearhead global action on violence, injuries and disabilities as major threats to public health. The application deadline is 18th January. Further details available from www.who.int/employment/vacancies/en/
Gerontontology takes centre stage in Istanbul

The International Association for Physical Therapists Working with Older People (IPTOP) shared a conference with the Turkish Gerontology Group, who organised a successful conference at the Cultural Military Museum in Istanbul.

Over 350 people attended, from Australia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United States and United Kingdom. WCPT President Sandra Mercer Moore attended.

The main conference topics were gerontology, neurology and orthopaedics in older people.

“This multi-stream conference provided the opportunity for 112 presenters to share expertise, exchange ideas and learn from each other,” said Olwen Finlay, Chair of IPTOP. “IPTOP also had the opportunity to hold a business meeting, and appreciated the help and guidance from Sandra Mercer Moore in planning their programme for the forthcoming WCPT Congress in Vancouver.

WCPT President Sandra Mercer Moore (front left) with IPTOP Chair Olwen Finlay (front right) with Professor Filiz Can (back left) and Professor Nuray Kirdi (back right) of the Turkish group Physiotherapists Working for Older People.

Controversy positively encouraged

Honest discussion about controversial subjects is being encouraged at this year’s WCPT Congress, with a series of debates and discussion panels dealing with key issues affecting physical therapists internationally.

At discussion panels, a chair will lead six panellists from various parts of the world in fast-moving and open discussions to promote the exchange of ideas. The audience will have the opportunity to contribute and pose questions. Some of the subjects to be discussed are:

- Qualifying education – what are the right entry-level qualifications for physical therapy? Chair, Alice Jones, Hong Kong
- The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) – how should we be using it in physical therapy practice, education and research? Chair: Catharine Sykes, Australia
- Standards and specialisation – how should we develop international/national standards? Chair: Emma Stokes, Ireland
- Politics and professional autonomy: the rights of passage for professional status. Chair: Elisabeth Haase, Denmark

There will also be debate sessions, where one or two speakers on opposing sides will exchange views and explore controversial issues facilitated by a chair. The audience will then be given the chance to raise points from the floor and challenge speakers. At the end, the audience will be asked to weigh the evidence, and vote for a winner. A debate on whether physical therapy should focus on its core expertise, chaired by Elizabeth Ellis of Australia, is currently planned.

Further information at: www.wcpt.org/congress/programme/other/index.php
It was my first journey across the Atlantic Ocean, and the first time I had participated in such an important event. The Congress has remained in my memory since as a remarkable and inspiring experience.

I was able to attend due to the kind financial assistance of the American Physical Therapy Association. As President of the Polish Section of Physiotherapy, I had a year earlier established a programme of two professional visits for them in Poland, which included also meetings with Polish physiotherapists, discussions and exchange of ideas on education and research. As a result of this, I was invited by APTA to a pre-Congress meeting on “Physical therapy licensure and certification in other countries” organised at the Queen Elisabeth Hotel in Montreal on 16 June 1974. I presented the Polish system of education of physiotherapists, and found the meeting an extremely interesting forum for the exchange of views between such distant continents. Our problems proved to be similar, which brought all the participants much closer. We realised that there was a global significance to ensuring physiotherapists had the best possible education and professional qualifications.

The Congress scientific sessions and the 8th WCPT General Meeting also took place in the Queen Elisabeth Hotel. As a voting delegate at the General Meeting, I felt very stressed. Because of currency problems faced by Poland in the 1970s, the Polish Section of Physiotherapy was then behind with member fee payments for 1973 and 1974, which resulted in lowering its status to provisional membership in WCPT. That meant it was not possible to actively participate in the General Meeting. But my stress eased as, to my great satisfaction, after a number of talks with the WCPT President Doreen Moore and the Secretary General Elisabeth McKay, the General Meeting restored full membership to the Polish Section of Physiotherapy.

Of the 37 WCPT membership organisations at the time, 33 participated in the Montreal General Meeting. Bearing in mind that this number has now increased to 92, this provides an indication of how physical therapy has become the dominant therapeutic medium internationally since then.

I still remember the motto of the 7th Congress: “Expanding Horizons of Physical Therapy”. It was remarkable not just for its international atmosphere and social events, such as gala dinner at the bank of the St. Lawrence River, but...
for the quality of the speeches.

It was a memorable day for my professional career, when I heard Doreen Moore say at the opening ceremony: “…the theme chosen for the Congress should act as a challenge to each of us so that we may consider our profession today and project it into the future keeping in mind the constant change all around us…”.

This statement is still relevant.

Look at the motto of the forthcoming 15th Congress, three decades later and with the world having undergone enormous change: “Moving Physical Therapy Forward”. At the Montreal Congress, 92 papers were presented. Many revealed new trends and a growing interest in neurophysiology and electro-diagnosis. Just five papers addressed such areas as clinical education and methodology for research work.

Most papers were on the role of physiotherapy in the rehabilitation of the persons with locomotory system impairments, whereas only three papers focused on the applications of physiotherapy in cancer and cardiovascular diseases, which are such important areas now, with physiotherapists playing a key role in the implementation of the WHO programme on stroke, for example.

Since Montreal, WCPT has tremendously increased its range of activities and developed its own guidelines and recommendations. It has become absolutely clear that physiotherapy is essential and indispensable.

As one of Poland’s outstanding scholars Professor Wiktor Dega said at the 1st National Congress of Physiotherapy in Pozna, Poland in 1962: “…Movement is a medication. It has neither substance, nor packaging. Its substance springs out of an idea born from science and experience. Its application requires true mastery. Its handing over to the patient by the physiotherapist with sensitive personality and heart makes it an irreplaceable remedy…”

I believe that every physiotherapist is now aware of the truth that our profession is unique and undergoes rapid changes. I could list numerous other examples of achievements made in physiotherapy since my participation in the Montreal Congress, yet I am sure that the Vancouver Congress will highlight most of them.

My memories of my trip to the 7th WCPT Congress in Canada will remain with me for ever. The high standard and prestige currently enjoyed by physiotherapy makes me really very proud.
A profession of increasing stature

One of the appeals of a WCPT Congress is the vivid insight it provides into the profession in other countries. As a taster to this year’s Congress in Vancouver, here is a brief introduction to the profession in Canada, provided by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association.

Ask a Canadian for a defining characteristic of their country and invariably, even though the country’s regions are very diverse, mention will be made of its publicly funded health care system. Canadian citizens enjoy universal access to comprehensive doctor and hospital services, as long as there is a medical necessity for them.

Forty years ago, “medically necessary” health care could be summed up in two words: hospitals and doctors. Today, hospital and physician services account for less than half of the total cost of the system. In short, the practice of health care has evolved.

The profession’s growth

Physical therapists (PTs) in Canada are among a limited number of primary health care professions providing first-contact health care services in public and private practice settings. As members of inter-professional health care teams, physical therapists increasingly address population health needs while continuing to provide Canadians with direct access to the physiotherapist services they require. This includes addressing prevention and wellness as part of Canadians’ rehabilitation needs.

The stature of physical therapy has evolved with time, and the profession currently enjoys significant support from Canadian health professionals and the public at large. Physiotherapy is now the fifth largest health care profession in Canada, with room to grow.

Most schools of physical therapy in Canada now run Master’s degree programmes, requiring new students to hold a qualifying Bachelor’s degree before studying physical therapy. By 2010, it is anticipated that all Canadian universities will grant Master’s degrees as an entry-level credential in physical therapy.

In recent years, public funding cuts have reduced Canadians’ access to physical therapy services in acute care and rehabilitation hospitals. Well over 40 per cent of all physical therapists in Canada work in or own a private practice. This means that many Canadians pay for physical therapy services, or have private insurance to cover the cost.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) has been active in advocating for the profession and people without the means to pay for physical therapy services – including retired seniors, workers with no private health insurance, people with chronic illnesses.

Clinic visits

A clinical visits programme is being organised to coincide with congress, providing an insight into physical therapy in Canada. Visits focusing on the following treatment areas are available: amputation, arthritis/rheumatology, burns, cardiac, chronic pain, clinical research, general orthopaedics, geriatric rehabilitation, paediatrics, private clinics, respiratory, spinal cord injury, stroke/brain injury, women’s health. Space is limited so register today. See www.wcpt.org/congress/programme/clinicalvisits.php.

Leaders in research

Canadian physical therapists are active in national and international research projects, and regularly publish original work in the world’s leading health journals. Canada’s top researchers are often sought after for collaboration on research and publishing projects, and a number of Canadians will present work and preside over workshops at World Physical Therapy 2007.

To learn more about practice in Canada, visit the CPA website at, www.physiotherapy.ca.
We must continue to lobby government, Regional President tells association

Asia Western Pacific Regional President, Margot Skinner, is supporting the Singapore Physiotherapy Association in its attempts to gain more status and autonomy for the profession. Attending the association’s Congress in August, she met the Singapore Minister of Health when he opened proceedings, and joined with members of the association in reminding him of the importance of the profession’s autonomy.

“As a health professional group highly skilled in the management and prevention of musculo-skeletal, neurological and cardio-pulmonary disorders, physiotherapists have a lot to offer,” says Margot Skinner.

“However, in many countries we are still spending much of our time lobbying governments and other funders in order to gain degree-level education, registration, autonomy to practise and to provide for adequate numbers of physiotherapy positions in hospitals, communities, schools, industry, education and other work places.”

“We must not lose momentum or opportunities to lobby on these issues. I was pleased to be able to support the Singapore Physiotherapy Association in their efforts to remind their Minister of Health of the importance of these issues when he opened their Physiotherapy Congress.”

Margot Skinner said she was also encouraged at the way physiotherapists in Singapore were helping physiotherapy colleagues in nearby Cambodia to upgrade their knowledge levels and have a national conference themselves.
South America Region

First Congress focuses on health promotion

The First WCPT South America Region Congress, incorporated with the 12th Latin American Physiotherapy and Kinesiology Congress, was held in Bogota, Colombia in September. There were representatives from all of the WCPT South America Region’s Member Organisations. WCPT President Sandra Mercer Moore attended, along with WCPT Secretary General Brenda Myers.

The Congress aimed to reflect the important role of physical therapists in addressing health promotion and illness prevention through the use of physical activity. It also examined the intervention strategies that the profession was best suited to implement, and which would have most impact on public health.

Mabel Yvonne Espinel Gonzalez, the Regional Chair, said:

“The political, economic, social and professional arguments supporting the presence of the physiotherapist in these programmes is obvious. The profession can have a great impact in identifying intervention areas and opportunities for involvement.”

Africa Region

Rise of lifestyle diseases in Africa gets the attention it deserves

The 6th WCPT Africa Biannual Scientific Congress and General Meeting was hosted by the Association of Physiotherapists in Tanzania on 14-18 August, and held at the NSSF Water Front building in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania.

There were participants from physical therapy organisations in 12 countries: Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda. WCPT Europe was represented by the Danish Association of Physiotherapy. The WCPT Secretary General Brenda...
Myers attended and this gave members an opportunity to learn more about important WCPT issues.

The theme, “Addressing Diseases of Lifestyle” reflected the rise of lifestyle diseases such as heart diseases, chronic pulmonary diseases, diabetes and obesity in African communities. Physiotherapists have to be involved in advocating for physical activities within their communities to combat this trend.

The General Meeting, on 16th August 2006, was chaired by the Vice Chairperson, Barbara Batesaki from Uganda, in the absence of the Chairperson Tyson Simuzingili. Only paid up Member Organisations had voting rights during the General Meeting. During the meeting, members resolved to increase the subscription from one US Dollar to one and a half US Dollars per member per association.

Brenda Myers gave an update on the forthcoming WCPT Congress in Canada, and encouraged members to visit the WCPT website for detailed information. She advised members to book early for cheaper accommodation and air tickets. There is currently a shortage of funds for the Executive Committee of WCPT Africa to attend the Congress, and members were urged to try and contribute funds to the Regional Treasurer, Joyce Mothabeng, to enable this to take place.

The General Meeting confirmed that the Nigeria Society of Physiotherapists will host the next Regional Congress in 2008. It is hoped that this will give an opportunity for physiotherapists in West Africa to attend the Congress.

A new Regional Executive Committee was elected during the meeting: Barbara Batesaki, Chairperson (Uganda); Dorothy Semu, Vice Chairperson (Tanzania); Elias Maigeh, Secretary (Tanzania); Joyce Mothabeng, Treasurer (South Africa); Sylvia Kambalametore, incoming WCPT Africa member of the WCPT Executive Committee.

The Congress started off with a physiotherapy awareness walk from the Ministry of Health headquarters to the Congress venue, the NSSF Water Front Convention Centre. Physiotherapists marched to police band music along Dar es Salaam streets holding up placards with physiotherapy messages. People came out of their offices to watch.

Tanzania’s Deputy Minister of Health and Social Affairs Aisha Omar Kigoda, MP, was guest of honour at the opening ceremony. She officially welcomed delegates to Tanzania, and noted physiotherapy’s role as a specialism within hospitals, but also in rehabilitation and prevention. She highlighted the increase of non-communicable diseases in Africa arising from changing lifestyles. And she assured WCPT that Tanzania’s government would support the Association of Physiotherapists in Tanzania in establishing a regulatory body to monitor service delivery.