Press release

29 August 2019

Physical therapy: helping people take control of chronic pain

Physical therapy can play a significant role in helping people take control of chronic pain and improve their lives. Chronic pain and the role of physical therapists is the theme of World Physical Therapy Day on 8 September 2019.

Physical therapy helps people with chronic pain develop the skills they need to manage and take control of their condition, increase their activity and improve their quality of life.

A physical therapist will help people with chronic pain understand how pain is a built-in alarm system that with chronic pain is often too easily triggered. They will help reduce the fear attached to pain and explore long-term strategies to build confidence through engaging in activities that people with chronic pain may avoid because they are threatening or it may be painful to regain control. Some of the tools a physical therapist may use to help people take control of their pain include:

- pain education
- coping strategies
- problem solving
- pacing activities
- sleep hygiene
- relaxation.

Being active can help people manage chronic pain by:

- maintaining flexibility and movement
- improving cardiovascular health
- building and keeping muscle tone
- improving mood and general wellbeing
- helping control pain
- increasing confidence to take part in activities
- taking back control of your life and reducing your fear.

WCPT President Emma Stokes said: ‘Chronic pain is a global health burden and low back pain causes more disability than any other condition. If you have chronic pain, a physical therapist can work with you to suggest activities or a programme that’s right for you. They can help you understand how pain works, reduce your fears around pain, educate you about your condition,
encourage you to take part safely in physical activity, build your confidence, help you remain or return to work or participate in activities that allow you to live life the way you want to.

‘Talk to a physical therapist and discover how they can help you learn self-management techniques to manage your pain.’

The World Physical Therapy Day materials (leaflet, posters, infographics, postcard) are now available in 13 languages.

- [World Physical Therapy Day toolkit](#)

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**EDITOR’S NOTES**

**About physical therapy**

Physical therapists (also known 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 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.

**About World Physical Therapy Day**

World Physical Therapy Day falls on 8 September every year, and is an opportunity for physical therapists from all over the world to raise awareness about their 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 in 1951.

**About WCPT**
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WCPT is the profession’s global body representing over 450,000 physical therapists/physiotherapists from member organisations in 120 countries. More information: www.wcpt.org.