



Press release

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Physical therapists help add life to years

Physical therapists can help older people to be independent, improving quality of life and reducing health care costs. This is the message from thousands of physical therapists across the world as they prepare to take part in World Physical Therapy Day on 8th September 2016.

Every year, World Physical Therapy Day allows individual physical therapists and WCPT member organisations to celebrate their contribution to global health. This year's event builds on the success of 2015, when thousands of physical therapists used the #worldptday hashtag on Twitter to unite events across the world.

This World Physical Therapy Day uses the theme "Add life to years" and the hashtag #addlifetoyears, following the World Health Organisation's World Report on Ageing and Health which says that "maintenance of functional ability has the highest importance" for older people.

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy played a significant role in the consultations for the new WHO ageing and health strategy. "World Physical Therapy Day is the first opportunity since the adoption of the report for physical therapists to show how important the profession is in ensuring healthy and active older people," says WCPT President Emma Stokes.

"The evidence of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of physical therapy for older adults is incontrovertible. World Physical Therapy Day, with its focus on adding life to years, gives physical therapists a great platform to communicate this message to older people, the wider community and health care policy and decision-makers."

By 2050 the global population will include two billion people aged 60 or over, and 400 million aged 80 or over. Physical therapists have a key role in helping people with long-term conditions achieve their goals, fulfil their potential and participate fully in society.

"Every day frontline physical therapists are transforming lives through the application of their clinical skills and experience. This is particularly so when working with older people whose health needs increase as they age", says WCPT Chief Executive Officer Jonathon Kruger.

"Enabling older people to maintain their independence and continue to participate in society is a key skill of physical therapists around the world. In the coming years these skills will be more in demand and the global profession is willing and able to meet that challenge."

For more information, contact your national physical therapy organisation (see www.wcpt.org/members), see the resources at www.wcpt.org/wptday-toolkit or email Mia Lockner at mlockner@wcpt.org

Background information

About physical therapy

Physical therapists (known in many countries 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.

More detailed information about what physical therapists do can be found on WCPT's website: www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-descriptionPT.

Campaign resources

WCPT has pulled together a collection of additional resources on ageing including research supporting the role of physical therapy in promoting quality of life in older people and information for the public: <http://www.wcpt.org/wptday-resources>.

About World Physical Therapy Day

World Physical Therapy Day falls on 8th September every year, and is an opportunity for physical therapists from all over the world to raise awareness about their crucial 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. More details and toolkit at: www.wcpt.org/wptday.

About the World Confederation for Physical Therapy

WCPT is the profession's global body representing over 350,000 physical therapists/physiotherapists from member organisations in 114 countries. More information: www.wcpt.org.