

Draft Policy statement: Disability

Pending approval at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT in 2015

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) believes that physical therapists are equipped through their education to meet the functional needs of people with disabilities [1]. Physical therapists play a vital role in preventing health and health-related problems associated with disability and optimise functional outcomes for people with disability.

WCPT endorses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2] and the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities [3]. The WCPT encourages its member organisations to promote the implementation and monitoring of these conventions; to support national efforts to establish, strengthen, and maintain the services, systems, and policies required to meet the needs of all people and populations and to advocate for the role of physical therapists in enabling optimal human functioning.

WCPT supports unreservedly the rights of people with disabilities to opportunities, choices, and independence, and to take on roles in society on an equal basis with others. WCPT supports the role of physical therapists in facilitating the attainment of these rights.

Physical therapists provide evidence-based, inclusive, and restorative interventions that reduce the incidence and impact of disease and disability, promote health and quality of life. These interventions help people maintain and/or improve physical activity, functional independence, and participation in their usual and customary roles.

In line with its policies and guidelines, WCPT encourages and supports member organisations to:

- ensure that physical therapist professional education programmes include comprehensive coverage of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are relevant to examining and providing interventions for people with disabilities;
- meet the needs of those with disability by:
 - including curriculum content in all physical therapist professional entry-level education programmes on functioning and disability and the multifaceted nature of disability [4]
 - producing/making available educational materials about the unique opportunities physical therapists have to prevent disability and improve functioning across the life span
 - producing/making available education and practice resources about disability and rehabilitation
 - including content on evidence-based interventions at WCPT, regional, and national conferences
 - providing continuing education programmes on functioning, disability, and rehabilitation;
- support, whenever possible, involvement of people with disabilities in the planning, conducting, and reporting of physical therapy research;
- support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the profession by:
 - ensuring decisions on admission or readmission to the profession are based on competence to practise, not disability
 - adopting inclusive policies;

- 41 • promote the use of the best evidence to support inclusion of persons with disability by:
 - 42 ○ utilising existing databases and evidence based literature on effective interventions
 - 43 ○ promoting the collection and publication of data on functioning and disability using the ICF
 - 44 [1]
 - 45 ○ publicising funding sources for research on disability and rehabilitation;
- 46 • promote the ethical treatment of all, regardless of their level of functioning, by raising awareness
- 47 of:
 - 48 ○ the need to treat people on the basis of capacity and potential, national laws, regulations,
 - 49 and the professional standards of practice that govern the profession
 - 50 ○ international declarations and laws in areas such as human rights, equal opportunity, and
 - 51 discrimination;
- 52 • educate health professional communities, service users, and the public about the role and
- 53 benefits of physical therapists as crucial members of inter-professional teams by:
 - 54 ○ publishing information on disability prevention and rehabilitation in professional
 - 55 publications
 - 56 ○ raising awareness within inter-professional collaborative teams of the important role of
 - 57 physical therapists in preventing functional loss associated with potentially disabling
 - 58 conditions
 - 59 ○ referring to and collaborating with other professions where appropriate
 - 60 ○ exchanging disability-relevant information, for example through websites and forums;
- 61 • advocate for physical therapist involvement in the development of national policies, programmes,
- 62 services and systems;
- 63 • advocate for national policies, programmes, services, and systems that facilitate the effective
- 64 delivery of physical therapy services to people living with disability and that follow the principles
- 65 of:
 - 66 ○ universal health coverage
 - 67 ○ accessible information and physical environments
 - 68 ○ direct access to physical therapist services
 - 69 ○ inter-professional collaborative practice.

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71 **Glossary**

72 **Capacity** — describes an individual's ability to execute a task or an action [4].

73 **Disability** — is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions
74 that results from the interaction between an individual's health condition and the personal and
75 environmental contextual factors. Personal factors are the particular background of an individual's life
76 and living, and comprise features of the individual that are not part of a health condition or health
77 states, such as: gender, race age, fitness, lifestyle, habits, coping styles, social background,
78 education, profession, past and current experience, overall behaviour pattern, character style,
79 individual psychological assets, and other characteristics, all or any of which may play a role in

80 disability in any level. Environmental factors are external factors that make up the physical, social and
 81 attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their lives. Disability can be described at
 82 three levels: body (impairment of body function or structure), person (activity limitations), and society
 83 (participation restrictions). [4]

84 **Participation** — is involvement in a life situation. [4]

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Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	Draft for member organisation review Final version to be presented to the General Meeting of WCPT 2015
Date for review:	
Related WCPT policies:	WCPT ethical principles WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members • Standards of physical therapy practice • Patients'/clients' rights in physical therapy • Quality services • Informed consent • Records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal WCPT guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guideline for standards of physical therapy practice • Guideline for records management: record keeping, storage, retrieval and disposal • Guideline for physical therapist professional entry level education. London, WCPT endorsements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child • The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities • The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

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87 **References**

88 1. World Health Organization. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.
 89 Geneva, Switzerland: WHO; 2001. <http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/> (Access date 17th
 90 December 2013)

- 91 2. The United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. New York, USA: UN;
92 2006. (Access date 17th December 2013)
- 93 3. The United Nations. Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with
94 Disabilities. New York, USA: UN; 19 (Access date 17th December 2013)
- 95 4. World Confederation for Physical Therapy. WCPT guideline for physical therapist professional
96 entry level education. London, UK: WCPT; 2011. (Access date 17th December 2013)