

# Draft Policy statement: Non-communicable diseases

*Pending approval at the 18<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of WCPT in 2015*

The United Nations<sup>1</sup> has identified cardiovascular disease including strokes and heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer and their concomitant risk factors (tobacco, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity, overweight/obesity, raised blood pressure; raised blood sugar; and raised cholesterol) as the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) leading to the highest incidences of mortality around the world. However, other diseases including, but not limited to, musculoskeletal (e.g., osteoarthritis, osteoporosis), neuromuscular (e.g., Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis), and cognitive and/or neuropsychological (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, senile dementia, depression and anxiety) contribute to the high incidence (Suggest statistics to support this statement) of disability around the world. (Suggest statement on the effectiveness of physiotherapy treatment in these diseases)

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) believes that physical therapists are equipped through their education to meet the needs of people with or at risk of NCDs. Physical therapists provide evidence-based interventions that can reduce the incidence of NCDs and associated disability and mortality. They play a vital role in preventing and managing NCDs by:

- providing evidence based primary and secondary prevention programmes;
- promoting health and quality of life; and
- improving and maintaining physical activity levels and functional independence.

WCPT recognises that:

- the increasing incidence of NCDs imposes a physical and economic burden on individuals, societies and health systems;
- measures to prevent NCDs are vital;
- NCDs and their risk factors have an impact across all populations in all geographic areas regardless of income level;
- prevention of NCDs and risk factors will decrease rates of mortality
- prevention of NCDs and risk factors will decrease the prevalence and severity of disability.

WCPT encourages and supports its member organisations to:

- advocate for exercise and physical activity as the low cost and universally available means of reducing the risk factors for NCDs;
- advocate that physical therapists are well placed to advise on appropriate and effective physical activity programmes for individuals and targeted populations, such as the elderly or those with disability (including cognitive disability);
- advocate that sufficient resources should be allocated to confronting those NCDs that can be prevented and treated by physical therapists;
- advocate for national policies, programmes, services and systems that enable physical therapy services to be delivered effectively to people with NCDs and/or their risk factors;

- 41 • advocate for physical therapist involvement in the development and delivery of evidence-  
42 based, affordable, cost-effective, population-wide physical activity programmes across health  
43 and related service systems (eg social, education, and community services);
- 44 • advocate for the involvement of physical therapists in research which contributes to  
45 understanding effective interventions, including prevention, for NCDs and their risk factors;
- 46 • promote the involvement of physical therapists in the development and implementation of  
47 national NCD plans;
- 48 • advocate for public policies and practices that empower individuals, families, and  
49 communities to make healthy choices and lead healthy lives;
- 50 • support global initiatives on NCDs and emphasise the evidence for the efficacy of physical  
51 activity in the prevention of NCDs and their risk factors;
- 52 • support interprofessional collaborative practice and person-centred integrated service  
53 delivery that are necessary for successful prevention and management of NCDs and their risk  
54 factors;
- 55 • promote the use of the best evidence in preventing and managing NCDs and their risk factors  
56 by:
  - 57 ○ utilising existing databases and evidence-based literature on effective interventions
  - 58 ○ publicising funding sources for research on the efficacy of physical therapy in the  
59 prevention and management of NCDs and their risk factors.
- 60 • educate health professional communities, service users, and the public about the crucial roles  
61 of physical therapists and the benefits of their interventions in combating the NCD epidemic  
62 through:
  - 63 ○ publishing information in professional publications
  - 64 ○ raising awareness of the important role of physical therapists in the prevention of  
65 disability and mortality associated with NCDs and their risk factors
  - 66 ○ exchanging information within the physical therapy community (for example, through  
67 websites and forums) on the prevention and management of NCDs and their risk  
68 factors.

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## 70 Glossary

71 Disability — is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions that  
72 results from the interaction between an individual's health condition and the personal and  
73 environmental contextual factors. Personal factors are the particular background of an individual's life  
74 and living, and comprise features of the individual that are not part of a health condition or health  
75 states, such as: gender, race age, fitness, lifestyle, habits, coping styles, social background,  
76 education, profession, past and current experience, overall behaviour pattern, character style,  
77 individual psychological assets, and other characteristics, all or any of which may play a role in  
78 disability in any level. Environmental factors are external factors that make up the physical, social and  
79 attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their lives. Disability can be described at  
80 three levels: body (impairment of body function or structure), person (activity limitations), and society  
81 (participation restrictions).<sup>2 3 4</sup>

82 Non-communicable disease (NCD) — is a disease that is not contagious, is of long duration and  
 83 generally slow progression. NCDs are also known as chronic diseases, lifestyle diseases or diseases  
 84 of civilisation. There are four main groups of NCDs accounting for most of the deaths and years of life  
 85 lived with disability; cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, cancers and diabetes.  
 86 There are other important NCDs, such as oral diseases, cognitive and/or neuropsychological  
 87 disorders and arthritis which have a significant impact on health and well-being. NCDs are associated  
 88 with four common, modifiable behavioural risk factors; unhealthy diet, tobacco use, harmful use of  
 89 alcohol and physical inactivity.<sup>56</sup>  
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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
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Related WCPT policies:	<a href="#">WCPT ethical responsibilities</a> WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Standards of physical therapy practice</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Patients'/clients' rights in physical therapy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Quality services</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Physical therapists as exercise experts across the lifespan.</a></li> </ul> WCPT guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guideline for standards of physical therapy practice</a></li> </ul> WCPT endorsements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities</a></li> </ul>

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93 **References**

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110 [campaign/What-is-HIC+qm+.html](http://www.whpa-ncdcampaign.org/website/About-the-campaign/What-is-HIC+qm+.html) (Access date 8th January 2014)