

International Organization of Physical Therapists in Pelvic and Women's Health



Introduction

I am pleased to pass on a message from the executive committee of the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Pelvic and Women's Health (IOPTPWH):

“Our heartfelt thoughts are with you all during this challenging time. The current pandemic is touching us all. May our response in this crisis bring us into a place where despite physical distancing and closed borders we can remain united in heart and in voice.”
(Executive Committee 2020)

This announcement appeared in the latest *IOPTPWH Newsletter* in March (IOPTPWH 2020). The issue, which is available online (www.wcpt.org/iptpwh/newsletters), also includes a report from the IOPTPWH president (Davidson 2020), and an edited version of this follows below.

Shirley Bustard

IOPTPWH Newsletter Editor

President's message

In my role as IOPTPWH president, I have received numerous e-mails from physiotherapists around the world seeking clarity on the choice of Dubai for the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) Congress 2021 (Fig. 1). Concerns were raised regarding the safety of members considering the laws of the United Arab Emirates with respect to diversity, sexuality, women's rights and gender issues. Physiotherapists asked if the IOPTPWH subgroup committee was supportive of Dubai as the choice for WCPT Congress 2021. Our committee discussed these issues in depth in meetings over



Where the world of physical therapy meets

Figure 1. Logo of the 2021 World Confederation for Physical Therapy Congress.

the following months, raising concerns regarding the safety and freedom of our delegates attending, presenting, and talking about pelvic health, women's and men's rights, and gender diversity. I sought clarification of our concerns with WCPT representatives, and a video conference was held in December to discuss these concerns in person.

We have been reassured by the WCPT that there will be no restrictions on presentations or content at Congress, and that all topics in our fields of interest will be welcome. They have also reassured us that the delegates will be safe and free to discuss these at Congress events. The WCPT are extremely keen for us to attend in order to provide support and education in our areas of interest. The field of pelvic and women's health is undergoing significant growth, and more and more physiotherapists are interested in attending presentations, workshops and courses. This was made very clear at WCPT Congress 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, when all our events were oversubscribed, and many physiotherapists missed out because rooms were already at maximum capacity. As a committee, our decisions regarding Congress will be just the same as those of our delegates – it will be up to all of us as individuals to decide whether or not to attend. You should seek advice from your local governmental authorities, and weigh up your personal safety and beliefs before making a commitment. To assist you with your decision, the WCPT has provided the following information on its website:

- the selection criteria for Congress (WCPT 2019a);
- advice for visitors (WCPT 2020a);
- frequently asked questions about Congress (WCPT 2020b);
- WCPT President Emma Stokes' blog entry about diversity, inclusion and dissonance (Stokes 2019);
- the members of the Congress Programme Committee (WCPT 2019b); and
- why Dubai was chosen as a location (WCPT 2020c).

At this stage, the committee is committing to a full programme of activities in Dubai, including courses, focused symposia, networking events

and social events. We hope that many people submit abstracts for presentation, and that, by providing excellent education and networking events, the physiotherapists in the wider geographical area will benefit. If you have any concerns, questions or comments, please feel free to contact me (e-mail: president@ioptwh.wcpt.org).

Melissa Davidson
IOPTPWH President

COVID-19

The WCPT is a global hub for information and resources about COVID-19 that are relevant to the physiotherapy profession (WCPT 2020d).

World health professionals are calling for governments to prioritize support for healthcare workers who are in the front line of the fight against coronavirus (WCPT 2020e).

The latest news can be found on the WCPT website (www.wcpt.org/news).

World Confederation for Physical Therapy

The WCPT will be changing its name to World Physiotherapy later this year (WCPT 2020f). Nevertheless, while this will be used for all externally facing communications and materials, the World Confederation for Physical Therapy will continue to be used for all legal and governance matters (see p. 98).

Shirley Bustard
IOPTPWH Newsletter Editor

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