

The consequences of armed violence, landmines and other weapons of war

Policy statement

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The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) believes that physical therapists play a vital role in dealing with the health problems and functional limitations that are the direct consequence of armed violence and the use of landmines and other weapons of war, even in peace times. Health service delivery systems in countries where significant violence has occurred rarely have the capacity to respond to the demands placed on them. Landmines, cluster munitions and remnants of weapons of war, in particular, pose an indiscriminate threat to health and continue to be active long after conflicts have ended. Rehabilitation services and equipment provision are often poorly funded and inadequate to enable individuals to achieve the full functional recovery of which they are capable and to which they have a right. ¹

Physical therapists are among the health professionals instrumental to the effective treatment, rehabilitation and social inclusion of civilian populations, refugees, evacuees, internally displaced people and wounded armed forces personnel. Access to physical therapist interventions is essential for those populations that are in need of physical rehabilitation services. Where physical therapists practise in conflict zones, WCPT believes that they have a right to be protected in carrying out their service provision.

Physical therapists support the development of national policies, programmes, services and systems whereby physical therapy can be delivered effectively to people living with the consequences of armed conflict, landmines and other weapons of war.

WCPT opposes the unintentional or intentional use of landmines, nuclear, chemical and biological agents, and other weapons of armed violence, all of which undermine health and threaten survival. To this end WCPT supports:

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ²
- the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ³
- the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction ⁴
- the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction ⁴
- the World Health Organization Armed Violence Prevention Programme ⁵
- the Convention on Cluster Munitions ⁶

Peace and security are fundamental requirements for health and development. WCPT advocates for peaceful conflict resolution through negotiation and diplomatic solutions.

WCPT encourages member organisations to work towards the elimination of landmines, nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of armed violence. Member organisations can do this by:

- encouraging their national governments to sign and comply with the relevant international declarations, conventions and treaties
- adopting a proactive role in providing physical therapy services to survivors of conflict including refugees, evacuees, internally displaced persons and returnees
- raising awareness of the broad ranging consequences of armed violence, landmines and other weapons of war not only on impairments but also on the way people manage their lives
- adopting a proactive role in disaster response and preparedness plans ^{7, 8}

Further, member organisations can:

- prepare physical therapists for dealing with the consequences of armed violence, landmines and other weapons of war through education
 - participate in the formulation and development of national policies and programmes oriented to advocating for post-conflict societies
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Glossary (<https://world.physio/resources/glossary>)

Asylum seeker

Evacuee

Hazard

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Refugee

Rehabilitation

Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	Approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT in June 2011. Revised and re-approved at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT May 2015. Re-approved at the 19th General Meeting of WCPT May 2019
Date for review:	2023
Related WCPT policies:	WCPT ethical principles WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disaster management• Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members• Patients'/clients' rights in physical therapy WCPT endorsements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child• The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities• The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

References

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2. United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. New York, USA: United Nations; 1948. www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html (Access date 19 August 2019)
3. United Nations. The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. New York, USA 1968. www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/ (16 August 2019)

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4. United Nations. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. New York, USA1972. www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/ (16 August 2019)
 5. World Health Organization. Armed Violence Prevention Programme. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2005 [Available from: www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/armed_violence/en/.
 6. United Nations. The Convention on Cluster Munitions. New York, USA; 2008. www.clusterconvention.org/ (Access date 16 August 2019)
 7. International Council of Nurses. Armed conflict: nursing's perspective. Geneva, Switzerland; 2012. www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/E01_Armed_Conflict.pdf (Access date 16 August 2019)
 8. International Council of Nurses. Towards elimination of weapons of war and conflict. Geneva, Switzerland; 2012. www.icn.ch/images/stories/documents/publications/position_statements/E14_Elimination_Weapons_War_Conflict.pdf (Access date 16 August 2019)

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