

Female genital mutilation

Policy statement

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The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) opposes all forms of female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM is a fundamental violation of girls' and women's rights, including the right to life, the right to physical integrity and the right to health. In the absence of any medical necessity, FGM subjects girls and women to health risks and has life-threatening consequences. Further, it contravenes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and violates the fundamental ethical principle of "do no harm".^{1, 2} WCPT advocates that physical therapists should be aware that this practice has serious physical and mental health consequences.

FGM, often referred to as "female circumcision", comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural, religious or other non-therapeutic reasons. WCPT recognises that change in this practice may require time and great sensitivity to culturally accepted norms, but that every effort should be made to protect girls and women from FGM and to educate and modify behaviour to bring about its elimination.

The World Health Organization (WHO), together with a wide range of international organisations including WCPT, maintain the view that there is no justification for FGM.³

Although the global prevalence of FGM has decreased over the past decades, an estimated 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM.⁴

WCPT recognises the important role that the International Organization of Physical Therapists in Women's Health has played in raising awareness of this issue. WCPT offers its full support to its position statement on FGM.⁵

Further, WCPT supports:

- the global strategy to stop health providers from performing female genital mutilation¹
- the joint WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA policy statement on FGM that promotes policy development and action at the global, regional and national levels¹
- the Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation⁶
- the World Medical Association Statement on FGM and its Resolution on Violence Against Women and Children⁷
- the International Confederation of Midwives Statement on Female Genital Mutilation⁸
- the Abandon FGM Campaign⁹

WCPT urges all member organisations to join national and international efforts to oppose and eliminate this practice and believes that only through international collaboration will efforts to eliminate FGM be realised.

Glossary (www.world.physio/resources/glossary)

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Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	Approved at the 16th General Meeting of WCPT June 2007. Revised and re-approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT June 2011. Revised and re-approved at the 18th General Meeting of WCPT May 2015. Revised and re-approved at the 19th General Meeting of WCPT May 2019.
Date for review:	2023
Related WCPT policies:	WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torture • Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members WCPT endorsements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Convention on the Rights of the child • UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

References

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2. United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York, USA: United Nations; 1989. www.unicef.org/crc/ (Access date 29 August 2019)
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