

Candidate Statement for the WP Board

My name is **Alia Alghwiri** and I graduated from University of Pittsburgh, the United States in 2011 with a PhD in neurological physiotherapy. I returned to Jordan once I completed my studies to the University of Jordan as an assistant professor in physiotherapy where I teach my courses in English. In 2019 I became the first full professor of physiotherapy in Jordan.

I worked diligently not only as a professor but also practicing clinically in the field of physiotherapy in Jordan and for other Middle Eastern countries. Also, as an educator I try to keep my students updated on the current evidence-based knowledge to stimulate them to think holistically, which motivates them to explore other practices within the field. It enabled me to incorporate both the knowledge I have received in Jordan and the US to tailor a new foundation for future students and programs that were provided for those needed physiotherapy care. My experiences have equipped me to easily navigate between western and Middle Eastern cultures and social settings, which is a unique skill set that I possess. As an educator, I work on improving the field of physiotherapy and rehabilitation through multiple disciplines. I have participated in several community programs to spread awareness of the role of physiotherapy that focuses on disease prevention and physiotherapy management. Moreover, I have worked to educate communities about the conditions that are either caused by, acquired or congenital issues and the types of interventions that physiotherapists may provide has been part of my mission. Additionally, several programs were initiated to serve the necessitous people and refugees in the outskirts of Jordan. These programs benefited thousands of people who need medical advice and/or assistive devices for the elderly and people with disabilities.

One of these programs that I participated in was aimed to enhance the readiness of sport therapists in Jordan through proper training and licensing in collaboration with the Jordanian Olympic Committee which enabled physiotherapists to understand and prevent potential injuries or deaths of Jordanian athletes. Initiating these programs was a challenge, yet it enabled me to learn how to network and negotiate between different types of people within my community.

Furthermore, I have organized multiple courses with the WP Member Organizations for:

- 1) Jordanian physiotherapists which focused on the topics of "Sport Related concussion" and "Sleep in Athletes concentrating on the importance of sleep" and "Disturbances of sleep patterns".
- 2) Course for Lebanese physiotherapists: "The Role of Physiotherapists in Sports Related Concussion".
- 3) Course for Aspetar in Qatar: "The Role of Vestibular Rehabilitation after Sport Related Concussion".
- 4) Dubai conference: "Concussion Awareness, Understanding, and Reporting Behaviors Among Collegiate Athletes in Different Countries".
- 5) Courses for Kuwaiti physiotherapists: The Role of physiotherapy in: "Vestibular Disorders" and "Spasticity".

These courses were presented in English voluntarily not only to educate physiotherapists but also to learn different cultures within the Arab world, to expand my connections, and to understand their perspectives of the taught topics.

In addition, I was the president of the Jordanian Physiotherapy Society (JPTS) for 3 years. Through this position, I worked alongside WP Member Organizations to improve this profession across the Arab countries. The efforts that were conducted to improve physiotherapy was a success due to connections that were established through managerial meetings and scientific events. As a result of those connections, several plans were initiated to develop the field of physiotherapy within the Middle East enabling me to work with

colleagues from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Lebanon to collaborate in conducting research and publish articles that target multiple physiotherapy disciplines.

At the international level, I participated in several well recognized conferences and conventions to present my published research papers. The last contribution before the COVID-19 outbreak was the “World Confederation for Physical Therapy Congress” that was held in Geneva in 2019. During the preparation of the congress between 2017 and 2019, I served as a Congress Programme Committee (CPC) member with the WP which equipped me with the necessary knowledge that focused on governance and their duties during chairing meetings and leading discussions. Beside participating in preparing for this congress, I presented my novel research on the use of stem-cell therapy and physical therapy in people with multiple sclerosis and got an award entitled “*World Confederation for Physical Therapy Outstanding Platform Presentation Award by an Early Career Researcher*”. Participating in well-established conferences has enabled me to understand the level of international physiotherapy research and to connect with physiotherapists pioneers globally.

As described previously, many of the contributions I have tirelessly worked for was not easy due to social and cultural limitations as a woman living in the Middle East. Yet, those limitations did not hinder my ambitions from serving local and international communities. Through my expertise and knowledge, I became recognized by many international professionals as an influential person who has proved that there are no limits that restrict a woman from achieving her dreams by serving others. It is important to note that if it were not for the people that motivated me to achieve my goals and guide me through the struggles a woman faces in our community, I would have not reached the level of international experience I currently possess.

Being nominated for this position would enable me to devote more time facilitating the conducts of the WP to physiotherapy practitioners and educators to follow through the intended mission of the WP. Also, transferring knowledge that I currently possess to other board members of the cultural barriers and ethical gaps that we are currently facing for the WP to identify these issues and construct ways for resolving them. The main cultural barrier is language, having me on board will allow me to bring about the intended goals of the WP to Middle Eastern physiotherapists. Currently more women in the Arab community are aiming for elevated positions, something that was frowned upon before. Due to customs, a woman is rarely viewed as a productive member of society and with all things considered, I have clearly broken the cycle of misconceptions that are bestowed upon a woman growing up in the Middle East. Yet these are misconceptions that need to be addressed accordingly if I were to be nominated on the board. Equal opportunities should be provided for women to pursue their goals in life and mine is to contribute and give back to my community and to my fellow physiotherapy colleagues in Jordan and the Middle East. There are clear gaps within our cultural settings that hamper the growth of physiotherapy in the Middle East.

I have devoted much time and effort to develop my knowledge and reputation in hopes that I become a role model to many female and male physiotherapists in the Middle East to promote a more welcoming environment where physiotherapists and patients feel more secure. Therefore, the connections that I have gained with Middle Eastern countries through my experience will be of a great asset to possess as a board member. Finally, I am confident that you will see my unique skills, achievements and a touch of my exceptional personality is well suited for this position.

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