



Ann Moore

New ideas, big issues, new ways of thinking: why Congress will deliver

What makes a WCPT Congress special? The International Scientific Committee organising the programme for the 2011 Congress in Amsterdam, Holland, is building on past experience and surveys of physical therapists to create an invaluable professional event – whichever part of the world you happen to come from. Simon Crompton, editor of WCPT News, talks to Ann Moore, Chair of the Committee, about the planning to date, and what's in store.

It may sound a way off, but to WCPT's International Scientific Committee, 2011 has been looming large for a while now. The group of physical therapists from around the world who are responsible for putting together the scientific programme of World Physical Therapy 2011 have been considering its shape and aims since their appointment in summer 2008 – and they are taking some fascinating changes of direction.

Chair of the committee is UK physiotherapist Ann Moore, Professor of Physiotherapy and Head of the Clinical Research Centre for Health Professions at the University of Brighton. She says that what really enthuses her about the task is that she knows congresses make a difference. She speaks from personal knowledge. She's attended four of them.

"I think it's the sense of conviviality, the ease of networking, that makes them so special. I love the way that, during congresses, you can't help but be exposed to different ways of thinking, new ideas, big issues that other countries are facing and which put a new perspective on your own. There's that sense of the profession standing shoulder to shoulder."

That's why it's been a priority for the next Congress to be as inclusive as possible. Central to the programme will be focused symposia, where a convenor will lead a group of presenters through a series of linked presentations on a topic of international appeal. At least three of WCPT's regions have to be represented by the speakers contributing to each symposium – ensuring that sessions embrace the interests and practice of delegates whatever part of the world they come from.

The programme will start to be put together from February, once the focused symposia have been announced. But there are definitely structural changes on the way. One is to integrate the programme far more closely thematically.

In particular, the committee is looking to cater for clinicians and educators who want to hone their practical skills. At previous congresses, there have been pre- and post-congress courses focusing on applied skills, but these are now being integrated alongside the main programme. Delegates will be able to "pick and mix" sessions according to their professional interests. For example, they will be able to participate in a specialist course on one day, a clinical visit on another, and scientific programming on another.

Highly-regarded keynote speakers will also now be integrated into symposium sessions, so that they can answer questions and join in debates.

"We want a programme that will attract practising physical therapists as well as researchers and educators," says Ann Moore. "They'll be able to attend workshops, courses and discussions which complement the scientific programme, and will allow them to take away new skills."

The views of physical therapists themselves have been fundamental in shaping the new plans. In 2008, more than a thousand physical therapists around the world responded to a WCPT survey asking them about the issues that interested them the most. It found that the challenges of an aging society, new roles for physical therapists, physical inactivity and health promotion were common concerns around the world.

"What I found fascinating was how many common issues affect people globally," says Ann Moore. "This means there are some obvious issues we intend to address at the next Congress."

"This time, with all the progress made in previous years on technicalities like an on-line abstract management system, we feel we can really focus on getting a lively programme together, moulding it to the needs of as many people as possible."

The act of shaping World Physical Therapy 2011 is well and truly underway. Ann Moore is confident that her fifth Congress could well be her best.

For full details of the Congress, including deadlines for satellite programme sessions, poster abstracts and platform abstracts are available at <http://www.wcpt.org/congress>.