

WORLD CONFEDERATION FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY

REPORT OF PRESIDENT TO SECOND GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, 10th September, 1953

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as first President of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy these past two years. When your executive committee met together in Copenhagen and Stockholm in 1951, to consider what we should do and what we could do, we became very aware of the responsibilities which we had assumed. The distances were great and all business and discussions would have to be by correspondence. We asked ourselves can this be done. We could only try and do our very best. It was, we felt, fortunate that all the member organizations were firmly established, had high standards of education and practice. The ethical laws in each country were essentially the same. Problems too, were similar.

One of our first tasks, it was decided, was to learn more about each other. Accordingly each country was asked to prepare an article on its association giving pertinent facts about its development, standards of training, membership rules, etc. These were duplicated and included in a news bulletin which is distributed to member organizations at regular intervals. Exchange of journals was begun. We further recognised that we should develop working relationships with other international bodies such as World Health, Social and Economic Commission, U.N.I.C.E.F., U.N.E.S.C.O., all in the United Nations, the International Society for the Welfare of Cripples, International Polio and many others. All of these are concerned with some aspect of the rehabilitation of the handicapped.

As many of these international agencies named have headquarters in New York personal visits were possible. The cordial reception which I received and the continuing working relationships which have developed have been very gratifying.

We are deeply appreciative of the help which we have received from the International Society for the Welfare of Cripples. Through its newsbulletin information about the World Confederation for Physical Therapy has been circulated to every country, many of which have little or no physical therapy. We were privileged to have a full page supplement in a recent bulletin giving the history of the Confederation and news of this Congress. Physical Therapy visitors from overseas have been cordially welcomed at their office and help freely given in planning study visits.

The International Polio Congress generously awarded me a travel fellowship to attend this meeting—a tangible expression of their interest and faith in the World Confederation for Physical Therapy.

The World Confederation in turn has reciprocated and through its news bulletins has carried information about other international organizations, has responded to requests for information about Physical Therapy from physicians and agencies throughout the world, and has referred visitors to allied and member organisations.

National Physical Therapy Journals have published much international information for its members. In addition the Secretariat in London has established relations through correspondence with International Organizations in Europe, as you will hear in the Hon. Secretary's Report. Therefore it is believed we have learned far more about

each other as well as other international programmes than we had hoped for in 1951. Two projects were initiated:—

- (1) to assemble more detailed information about training,
- (2) laws governing practice in the various countries and the availability of bursaries or scholarships for study in the various countries.

It is hoped to have this information available in printed form within the next year.

The need has been recognized for additional printed material describing the scope of physical therapy for the purpose of answering inquiries. We all know what it is—but there is still a great need to interpret to others who we are and what our contribution can be in a rehabilitation programme.

It was the good fortune of the Confederation to receive an invitation from the Chartered Society of Great Britain to hold its first Congress in London. This has been a tremendous undertaking and has required continuous and inspired work on the part of the Congress Committee under the able Leadership of its Chairman, Professor Whillis. The Hon. Secretary, Miss Neilson, met with your President in June 1952 in New York to outline preliminary plans for the programme and for publicizing it. These were submitted to the Congress Committee which broadened and carried them through to completion.

Information about the Congress has been distributed to the four corners of the earth, through the colourful and symbolic poster, preliminary programme, in publications of the member organizations, medical journals and international bulletin.

The world-wide recognition of physical therapy and its essentiality in the rehabilitation of the handicapped, its role in prevention of disabling conditions places upon each of us a great responsibility. I feel that their recognition has come about not through propaganda, but by the every day good work and devotion to the patient by physical therapists everywhere. Physical therapists must therefore be well prepared, must ever be seeking and sharing knowledge. They must have a love and understanding of people, be tolerant of their frailties and to work co-operatively with colleagues in allied professions. Upon each national organization rests the responsibility of maintaining standards of education and practice and for establishing requirements for membership in their respective countries. The strength of the World Confederation lies in the strength of its member organizations, just as the strength of national societies depends on their individual members.

The question arises from time to time as to the purpose of a World Confederation and what does it do for or how does it effect National Organizations? This cannot be answered simply. Much of the benefits are intangible. Among the purposes of the Confederation are the maintenance and development of standards of education and practice throughout the world, the encouragement of greater use of Physical Therapy. This is done through Congresses, discussion and sharing, and not by international rules. Problems in every country are surprisingly similar and the mechanism to share experiences and methods in resolving these problems is of truly great value to the

profession and to the National Organizations involved. Our member organizations are widely separated by distance and by language, but as members of the World Confederation they are as one family and can call upon one another for counsel which may be translated by them into action.

Our financial resources are small but our combined professional and spiritual resources are great. Thus the profession is strengthened in every country by being a member of a distinguished and honourable family, the World Confederation. Our Confederation is just two years old—we are only just beginning to stand firmly and to confidentially face our future. That future depends not on a few, but on every physical therapist, through his work with patients, through his participation in the activities and business of his association and through working with professional colleagues and private individuals devoted to our common goal—the recovery of the patient, physically, socially and economically. I wish to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the members of the Executive Committee for their support and work during these past two years. Miss Verco of Australia assembled material on laws of practice, bursaries or scholarships. Miss Andrews, New Zealand, assembled material on training, Mrs. Agersnap, Denmark,

and Mrs. Coleridge, Sweden, collaborated on the News Letter, Miss Spence, Canada and Miss McAllister, Great Britain, participated in the initial planning of the programme for this Congress.

The work of our Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, Miss Neilson, has been monumental and devoted throughout these past two years. I am extremely grateful to her and to the Chartered Society for permitting her to spend so much time on the affairs of the Confederation and in the preparation of this wonderful Congress.

I also wish to thank the member organizations for their deep interest and faith in the World Confederation as has been tangibly expressed by donations and by their co-operation in all that has been asked of them. Your continued faith and support will keep this young Confederation growing properly—straight and strong, head tall, eyes clear, chin up, back straight, feet firmly placed and straight ahead.

M. ELSON, *President.*



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