



World Confederation  
for Physical Therapy



## World health professionals calling governments to prioritise support for healthcare workers in the front line against coronavirus

*Geneva, Switzerland, 4 March 2020 - The world's health professionals are calling for governments to support healthcare staff in the battle against Covid-19*

The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), which represents 31 million healthcare professionals, stands in solidarity with all healthcare workers across the globe who are on the front line in the fight to contain the current coronavirus epidemic.

All around the world, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and physicians are focusing their efforts on preventing, diagnosing, containing, and treating Covid-19 patients.

They are putting themselves at risk as they battle to protect their communities, often without the required personal protective equipment, such as masks and hazardous material suits, that can keep them safe from infection and therefore able to carry on their vital work.

The WHPA is calling on governments and healthcare organisations to support front line healthcare workers in any way they can, but especially and urgently through the supply of crucial personal protective equipment.

They should also ensure that staff are getting adequate breaks during their shifts, and time off between shifts, to be able to carry on in what could be a long-term global crisis.

Working in such conditions also takes its toll on the psychological health of staff, so appropriate support services for staff must also be put in place as a priority.

Dr. Otmar Kloiber, WHPA Chair and Secretary General of the World Medical Association, said: "It is sad that nurses and physicians died during this crisis and probably more will die. Deaths which may have been avoidable with better emergency preparedness. This crisis should be a wake up call for politicians and societies to make the necessary investment in emergency preparedness and to look into the vulnerability of our supply chains."

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said: "We are calling on governments to maximise support for nurses and other health professionals in the front line against coronavirus, both in terms of providing the necessary protective equipment and recognising the psychological pressures they are under and addressing them.

It is also essential that governments in their top-level decision making on combatting the virus, include the experience and leadership skills of nurses. Nurses' advice, based on their observations from the front line, are invaluable in containing the virus, as we have seen with previous epidemics."

FIP Chief Executive Officer, Dr Catherine Duggan said: "Pharmacists and the pharmacy workforce at community and hospital pharmacies and clinical biology laboratories are preventing the spread of the new coronavirus disease, advising the public, and supporting the efficient management of infection by healthcare systems. Since pharmacies are often the first point of contact with the health system, we call on governments to support them in these

roles and to count on pharmacists worldwide as key partners in the global effort to contain the outbreak.”

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### **About the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)**

The [World Health Professions Alliance \(WHPA\)](#) is a unique alliance of The International Council of Nurses (ICN), the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) and the World Medical Association (WMA). WHPA addresses global health issues striving to help deliver cost effective, quality health care worldwide. Together, the partners of the WHPA include more than 600 national member organisations, making WHPA the key point of global access to health care professionals within the five disciplines.

**The International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is a federation of national nurses associations, representing the more than 13 million nurses working worldwide. [www.icn.ch](http://www.icn.ch)

**The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)** is the global federation of national associations of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists representing more than three million pharmacists around the world. [www.fip.org](http://www.fip.org)

**The FDI World Dental Federation (FDI)** is a federation of approximately 200 national dental associations and specialist groups representing more than one million dentists worldwide. [www.fdiworldental.org](http://www.fdiworldental.org)

**The World Medical Association (WMA)** is the global federation of national medical associations from around the world, directly and indirectly representing the views of more than nine million physicians in over 106 countries. [www.wma.net](http://www.wma.net)

**The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT)**, the global voice for physical therapists/physiotherapists, has 121 national member organisations representing over 625,000 members of the profession. [www.wcpt.org](http://www.wcpt.org)