



## Congress on your home ground: a once in a lifetime opportunity

**What does it mean to host a WCPT Congress in your own country? For Dutch physical therapists, it's a matter of pride. For Canadian physical therapists, looking back to their congress four years ago, there's been a lasting effect. And it isn't just the scientific sessions that matter.**

Anton de Wijer, a manual therapist from Utrecht who has just stepped down as President of the Dutch Association for Manual Therapy, well remembers the first congress he attended in Washington in 1995, early in his career. "It was so inspiring that I've been to the congresses in Barcelona and Vancouver since then," he says, "and now of course I'll be going to the one in Amsterdam."

He's urging all Dutch physical therapists, and physical therapy students, to attend. They will have the opportunity to hear about topics that have implications for their daily practice, expand their networks, and actually meet some of the authors and researchers they are studying.

"We have a lot of Masters programmes in the Netherlands, and this is a wonderful opportunity to get in touch with colleagues who are reading and writing about the same things as you," he says.

"I've always found the congress hugely refreshing. The social and networking part, outside of the main programme, is so important, so I'd urge people to come for as much as they can. My special interest is orofacial, so I'll be making sure I meet with colleagues who work in that area."

Canadian physiotherapist Angela Growse was four years into her career when she attended the WCPT Congress in Vancouver, and thinks young Dutch practitioners have a treat awaiting them on their doorstep.

"I was working in burns, trauma and amputees. I went on a great clinical visit about amputees, where I ended up with a very interesting group of people. In fact, some of our discussions during the visit later went into a text book. It was also fabulous to interact with the manual therapy community and I made some very good contacts."

"It was so easy to start conversations with people – whoever was carrying one of those delegate backpacks! Whether it was old classmates or people from across the world who you had never met before, you'd end up having interesting conversations."

There were some papers on pain presented at the congress, says Angela Growse, that have truly affected the way she understands her patients and the way they feel on a day to day basis. "With access to 100 different subjects, and access to the researchers themselves, it's such a completely different learning experience from a textbook or a journal," she says.

Like Angela Growse, Jo Ann Walker Johnston from Saskatoon, Canada, attended her first congress in Vancouver in 2007, and liked it so much she's travelling to Amsterdam this year. "The seed was planted when I attended in Vancouver and it has been my ongoing goal to attend again," she says. "I have always had a dream to do volunteer work in Africa and in Vancouver my spirits just soared with the opportunity to listen and speak to physiotherapists from all over the world and have the opportunity to hear and discuss issues on a global scale."

Jo Ann, now a senior physical therapist in falls prevention, hopes she will eventually go to work in Kenya, and is keen to meet again with Kenyan practitioners at the Congress. She also hopes to tell others about her new initiative on community fall prevention.

"The congress allows me the opportunity to meet people with similar interests, to be inspired, to join special interest committees and hear words that continue to motivate me – whatever aspirations I might have or develop. In particular, it helps to make the physio world a smaller place, helping us gain new ideas, enhance our skill set and possibly teach others and share experiences."

To register for the WCPT Congress, go to [www.wcpt.org/congress/registration](http://www.wcpt.org/congress/registration)