

World Federation of Occupational Therapists Statement

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Statement on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Ageing:

As the global representative of occupational therapists, the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) expresses support for progress in the Western Pacific Region in advancing the thematic priority for the prevention and management of NCDs and promotion of healthy ageing.

Action reported by the Regional Office to mobilise communities to leverage local resources and reach vulnerable populations in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic is commended. Older adults with NCDs are known to be disproportionately at risk to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WFOT recognises that future work on this thematic priority must be informed by overwhelming evidence regarding the important link between mental health and prevention of NCDs¹. The strong associations and inter-related causal mechanisms between mental health disorders and other NCDs argue for a joint approach to intervention. Promotion of rehabilitation services is also required to address the increasing prevalence of NCDs. WFOT acknowledges that many people do not have access to rehabilitation services and advocates for equal opportunities to rehabilitation as a human right.

Consultation with occupational therapists is recommended to ensure the needs of older adults, particularly individuals with disabilities are fully addressed as work progresses to address NCDs. Occupational therapists promote health and well-being through the use of purposeful and meaningful occupations to reduce NCD risk factors. Occupational therapists are experts in adapting and grading activities and environments to remove barriers impeding full participation and satisfaction with daily life; they can therefore assist with planning, design and implementation of interventions, infrastructure and policy in relation to local contexts and population needs.

In closing, WFOT and its member organisations are deeply committed to working with governments at all levels, non-governmental organisations and service users to promote societal change for the prevention and control of NCDs. Enabling more people to lead active and healthy lives promotes lifelong community engagement and limits strain on health and social care systems.

¹ Stein, D., Benjet, C., Gureje, O., Lund, C., Scott, K., Poznyak, V. & van Ommeren, M. (2019). *Integrating mental health with other non-communicable diseases*. *BMJ* 364:kl295 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l295>