

Information sheet

Relationships between WCPT, international subgroups and WCPT member organisations

Introduction

WCPT is the sole international voice for physical therapy, representing more than 350,000 physical therapists worldwide through its 106 member organisations. The Confederation operates as a non-profit organisation and is registered as a charity in the UK.

WCPT member organisations are national associations where:

- the majority of the membership are qualified physical therapists;
- the majority of the governing body must be physical therapists;
- membership is open to all qualified physical therapists of the country unrestricted by consideration of nationality, race, creed, politics, gender or social status; and
- in the presence of more than one organisation open to all qualified physical therapists in the country, only the organisation representing the largest number of qualified physical therapists in the country shall be eligible for membership of WCPT.

Why does WCPT not permit more than one organisation per country to join WCPT?

- it is a requirement of the Articles of Association; and
- it has always been WCPT's belief that the profession is stronger nationally with one representative voice so it encourages organisations to come together as one.

What if there are competing national organisations?

- WCPT encourages them to come together as one, unifying perspectives and working towards common goals.

WCPT subgroups are international physical therapy organisations which have a specific area of interest and meet WCPT's criteria for recognition as a WCPT subgroup. They have to be composed of member organisations or groups recognised by a WCPT member organisation (members of the groups also have to be members of the WCPT member organisation). Subgroups have to have at least ten members, representing at least three of the WCPT regions.

Why is WCPT member organisation status important for subgroups?

- it demonstrates that there is a viable and sustainable national association;
- it is strongly associated with standards of education, practice and research; and
- it ensures that certain criteria have been met for recognition.

All international subgroups are financially independent of WCPT and are governed by their own constitutions.

Currently in 2014 there are 12 subgroups:

- [International Acupuncture Association of Physical Therapists \(IAAPT\)](#)
- [International Association of Physical Therapists in Animal Practice \(IAPTAP\)](#)
- [International Association of Physical Therapists working with Older People \(IPTOP\)](#)
- [International Confederation of Cardiorespiratory Physical Therapists \(ICCrPT\)](#)
- [International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists \(IFOMPT\)](#)
- [International Federation of Sports Physical Therapy \(IFSPT\)](#)
- [International Neurological Physical Therapy Association \(INPA\)](#)
- [International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Paediatrics \(IOPTP\)](#)
- [International Organization of Physical Therapists in Mental Health \(IOPTMH\)](#)
- [International Organization of Physical Therapists in Women's Health \(IOPTWH\)](#)
- [International Private Physical Therapy Association \(IPPTA\)](#)
- [International Society for Electrophysical Agents in Physical Therapy \(ISEAPT\)](#)

WCPT Articles of Association set out the requirements and responsibilities of subgroups (appendix 1).

In addition to subgroups there are a number of **WCPT Networks**. These differ from subgroups in that they are focused on individual membership for physical therapists belonging to a WCPT member organisation. They are primarily focused on sharing knowledge and discussion. They are in areas where there is unlikely to be a national organisation, but can also be a useful step for subgroups in development. A number of external groups are affiliated networks of WCPT. For further details see: <http://www.wcpt.org/networks>

What do international subgroups bring to the profession?

All subgroups aim to:

- promote and raise standards of education and practice in their field
- promote and facilitate evidence based practice and research amongst their members
- promote the work of the physical therapy profession within the field
- facilitate communication and information exchange within the field internationally and with other health professions and the general public
- communicate and collaborate effectively with individuals within the organisation and with other organisations
- assist national physical therapist professional organisations to develop national special interest groups

All have a presence within the WCPT website and most have independent sites or subsites on the WCPT site. Many have resources to help them achieve their objectives, some have developed internationally recognised standards for practice and/or specialisation in the specialty, some hold conferences and most have a social media presence. All contribute toward the success of the WCPT congress with programming contributions.

How does WCPT work with the subgroups?

Prior to recognition: WCPT provides support to groups that are interested in developing as an international subgroup. It has produced an information pack to help inform developments and this includes a template for a constitution. The development of a viable and sustainable subgroup can take years. The concerted effort and commitment of individuals working across national and organisational boundaries is fundamental to success. In future potential subgroups will be encouraged to set up as WCPT Networks in the first instance to help nurture developments and professional engagement and to assess and support future sustainability. It may be that some groups operate better at this level and WCPT will work with those involved to determine the best options.

Applying for recognition: there is a standard application form for international groups to complete and submit to WCPT, along with supporting information. WCPT requires that each organisation joining a subgroup must obtain a letter of recognition and support from the parent body, ie the WCPT member organisation. This letter serves to:

- demonstrate recognition of the group by the national professional association;
 - facilitate communication between national special interest groups¹ and the parent body;
- and

¹ National special interest groups may be referred to as sections, divisions, networks, subgroups, as agreed at a national level

- confirm support from the parent body for the involvement of the special interest group in the international subgroup.

The WCPT Executive Committee (EC) considers applications and, if the requirements are met, the EC can grant subgroup recognition and then present the group to the next WCPT General Meeting for confirmation.

After recognition: WCPT is in regular communication with all groups and available to provide support and guidance, and to seek input to projects and activities:

- subgroups are on the mailing lists for all key information from WCPT
- a teleconference is held every 6 months with Presidents/Chairs of the subgroups and the WCPT President and Secretariat staff; this provides the opportunity to discuss issues in common across the subgroups and facilitate communication and information sharing
- subgroups submit annual reports to the WCPT Executive Committee
- WCPT works with the subgroups on policy initiatives that may be specific to their fields of interest

In 2013 a successful two-day leadership forum was held in London with WCPT Executive Committee members and representatives of the subgroups to support ongoing developments.

WCPT General Meeting: subgroups are required to provide evidence of their ongoing fulfilment of the requirements for recognition and are reconfirmed at each General Meeting. Subgroups may send a delegate to the General Meeting with a right to speak, but not the right to propose or second motions or to vote. If there are matters where a subgroup wants to bring an issue to the attention of the meeting they are encouraged to do so through their members and to work with national WCPT member organisations to submit motions addressing the issue of concern to subgroups. Alternatively, subgroups may raise issues directly with the WCPT Executive Committee. The EC may be able to decide on the matter and the EC can also present motions to the General Meeting.

What is the relationship between WCPT member organisations and subgroups?

WCPT, its member organisations and national interest groups all benefit from the activities of international subgroups. In order for subgroups to work most effectively it is important that WCPT member organisations understand the relationship, as well as the benefits at both a national and international level. Where there is a national special interest group wishing to join an international subgroup, early discussions with the national parent body are encouraged. This can serve to raise awareness of the specialty field, promote open lines of communication about the process and requirements, and secure the support of the parent body. The national association will want to know what the possible implications are for them. For example:

- Are there financial consequences?
- How will decisions made nationally affect the international group?

- How will decisions made internationally affect national specialty groups and the WCPT member organisation?
- What commitment is required from individuals to support the groups?
- How are requirements monitored on an ongoing basis?

Where there is no national group in a defined area of interest it may be possible for the WCPT member organisation to join the international subgroup. This may apply to a small WCPT member organisation without a subgroup structure or one that is making a commitment to develop a national group in the area. The route by which a WCPT member organisation can join an international subgroup will vary from one subgroup to another and is not an option for all groups.

How can WCPT member organisations get involved and support subgroups in their development?

Through their membership of WCPT all national associations recognise the benefits of international links across the profession. Based on data collected by WCPT, and housed on the country profile webpage of each member organisation on the WCPT website, we know that not all eligible national interest groups participate in international subgroups. This information can be used by subgroups and WCPT member organisations to discuss the merits of international collaboration and encourage membership of WCPT subgroups.

WCPT member organisations can support developments by:

- maintaining open and regular communication with national special interest groups;
- discussing the merits of international collaboration with national special interest groups;
- ensuring a cohesive approach to international relations; and
- raising awareness of WCPT and the WCPT subgroups among their national special interest groups.

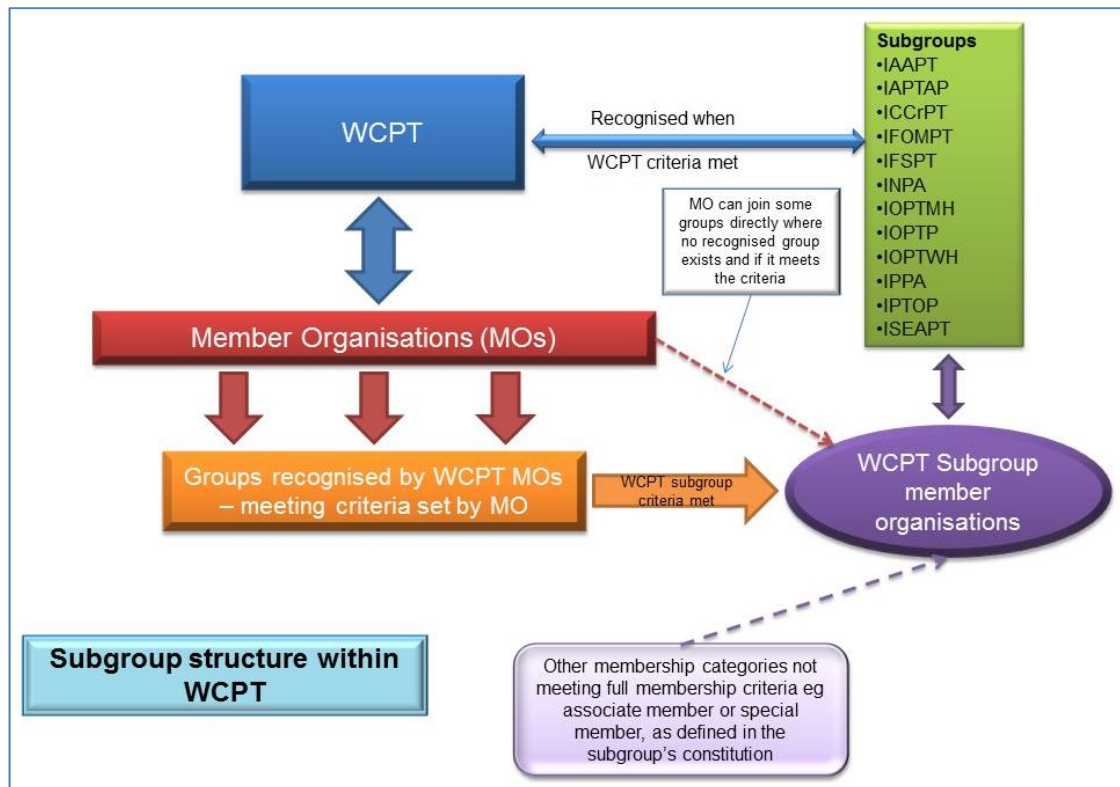
Not all WCPT subgroups operate in the same way although there is a lot of similarity and the underlying principles are the same. As much as is possible, it is important to understand how the membership of each one is governed and decisions are made, as this may help relationships between a WCPT member organisation and the national special interest groups that belong to a WCPT subgroup.

As noted above, WCPT member organisations may also choose to sign up as members of international subgroups, where this option is available.

Structure of relationships

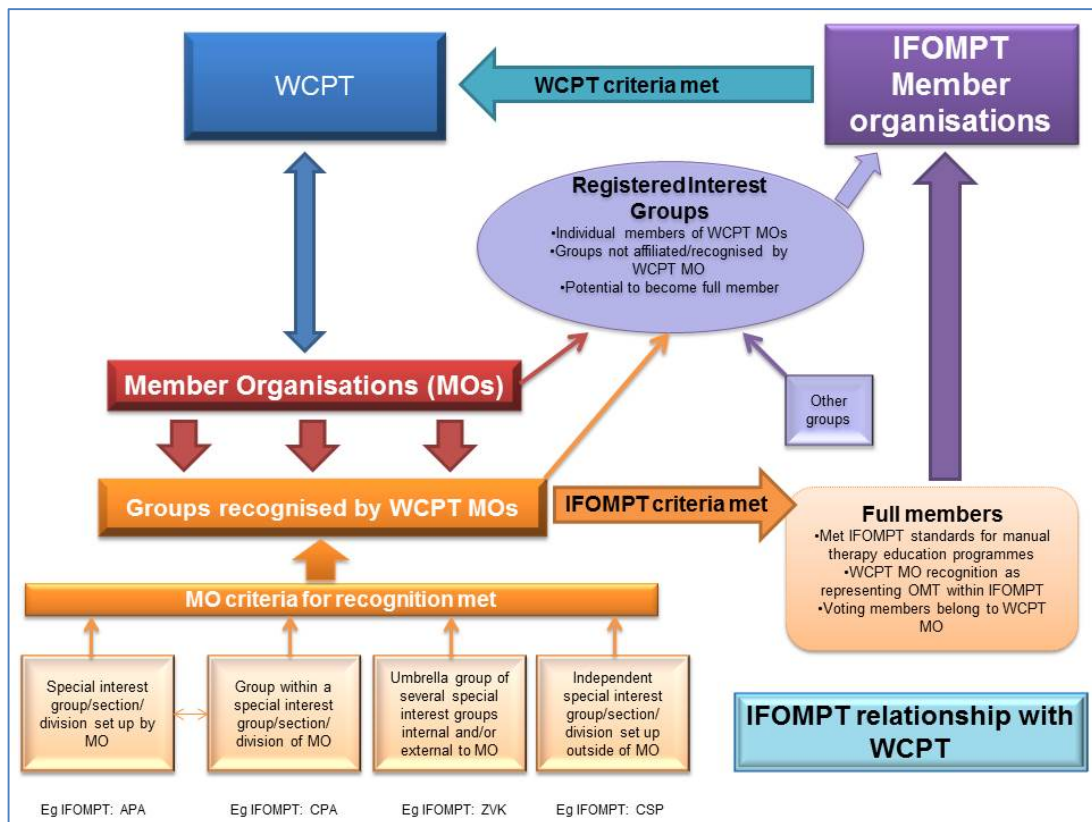
Figure 1 shows the relationship between WCPT, member organisations, their national groups and the international subgroups.

Figure 1 Subgroup structure



In the case of some subgroups, for example IFOMPT, this can be more complex as illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Complex subgroup structure



Understanding the communication and accountability relationships between all concerned should assist in determining who needs to be consulted and who will be affected as a subgroup moves forward in its development.

Staff from the WCPT Secretariat are available to support developments and facilitate communication.

Appendix 1: WCPT Articles of Association

Extracts relevant to subgroups

7. Subgroups

- 7.1 Subgroups shall have a specific interest and be organised to exchange scientific knowledge and to promote the advancement of physical therapy
- 7.2 Subgroups shall be approved by the executive committee, and require confirmation at the next and at each succeeding general meeting
- 7.3 Subgroups shall comply with WCPT articles for subgroups as decided by the general meeting (article 14)
- 7.4 Subgroups shall be composed of member organisations or groups recognised by the WCPT member organisation. Members of the groups must also be members of the WCPT member organisation. Subgroups shall comprise at least ten members representing at least three regions
- 7.5 Subgroups shall submit, articles, accounts, reports and other information to the executive committee as requested
- 7.6 Subgroups are financially independent of WCPT
- 7.7 Subgroups may send a delegate to general meetings with a right to speak but not the right to propose or second motions or to vote

14. Subgroup details

Formation

Subgroups shall:

- Have a specific interest and be organised to exchange scientific knowledge and to promote the advancement of physical therapy (article 7.1)
- Be composed of member organisations or groups recognised by their member organisation. Members of the groups must also be members of the WCPT member organisation. Subgroups shall comprise at least ten members representing at least three regions (article 7.4)
- Be approved by the WCPT executive committee and have their status confirmed at the next and each succeeding general meeting (article 7.2)

Reports

Submit articles, accounts, reports and other information to the executive committee as requested (article 7.5)

Rights

Subgroups may send a delegate to general meetings with a right to speak but not the right to propose motions or to vote (article 7.7)

14.1 Requirements

Subgroups shall

- comply with WCPT articles (article 7.3)
- submit their articles and other information as requested by the WCPT executive committee (article 7.5)

14.1.1 have a governing body composed of physical therapists only

14.1.2 submit proposed amendments to their articles for approval of the WCPT executive committee

14.1.3 submit all documents required in the official language of WCPT

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