

Dr Jo Beenhakker
Treasurer WCPT-Africa

The first Congress of the African Region of WCPT was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 8 - 11th April, 1994. Member countries of the Region present were Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while observers and delegates from Botswana, Cameroon, Malawi, Namibia, Oman, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda also participated. There were additional speakers and workshop leaders from Canada, England, Holland, Norway and Scotland.

The Region was privileged to have the President and General Secretary of WCPT, Professor AJ Fernando and Mrs Margaret O'Hare Knight who attended both the General Meeting and Congress. WCPT-Africa was congratulated on being the first of the five regions to host a congress.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This was well attended by official delegates and observers from eleven African countries and old friendships were renewed and new links forged.

The meeting encouraged strong inter-regional links between member countries of WCPT-Africa and non members, in order to improve the awareness of physiotherapy in the various countries.

The executive committee has enjoyed good support and regular communication from Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, but the President, Mrs Dorcas Madzivire urged representatives to provide regular information for the regional newsletter. Communication between

WCPT-Europe and the African region has been fruitful and most helpful.

WCPT, which assisted African countries in the past with sponsorship of eight physiotherapists to the course in Malta, also funded the first congress flyer and assisted one delegate from each member country to the congress.

Reports were given by the five member organisations and useful information was shared. One of the problems facing most African countries was the lure of physiotherapists from these countries, where their services are so desperately needed, to America. One of the reasons was the poor conditions of service and low salaries paid in the public sector. Monthly salaries vary from 45 US dollars (plus housing) in Uganda, 126 US dollars in Zambia, 750 in South Africa and 850 in Nigeria. The meeting strongly recommended that various African Governments should be urged to review the prevailing conditions of service for physiotherapists. The need for mid-level workers was agreed to and the importance of Community-based rehabilitation was recognised. Governments are to be urged to consult with physiotherapists in setting up such programmes in the various countries. Finance of the Region remains a problem and methods of raising funds need to be found. We cannot rely solely on assistance from WCPT and WCPT-Europe.

The President (Mrs Dorcas Madzivire) and Secretary (Mrs Marlene Brand) were re-elected for a further two year period and thanked for all the work done for the Region. Emma Sablerolles of Zambia be-

comes the new Vice-President and Jo Beenhakker takes over the Treasurer's portfolio from Sheena Irwin-Carruthers.

Congress

Arranging the Congress was the biggest challenge yet for the region. The Kenya Society of Physiotherapy, under the chairmanship of Alfred Otieno did the groundwork in Nairobi, while the executive committee operated from Harare and formed the Scientific Congress Committee under the chairmanship of Jo Beenhakker.

The theme of the congress was Reach for Rehabilitation: Physiotherapy in a changing Africa. Because of the changing socio-economic and political changes taking place in Africa, it was hoped to provide a platform for all African physiotherapists to exchange ideas on the practice of physiotherapy on the continent.

Subjects covered in the congress and pre-congress workshops varied widely. These included Acupuncture, Industrial Back problems, orthopaedic manipulative therapy and Education. Papers were also given on Quality Assurance, Community-based rehabilitation, specific health problems in Africa and community involvement in rehabilitation.

At special interest meetings, five interest groups were formed to promote interaction between member countries. These groups were Sports Injuries, Geriatrics, Neurology, Physiotherapy Education and Acupuncture.

The next General Meeting and Congress will be held in Zimbabwe in 1996 and hopefully many more South Africans will participate in this event.

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