

Seventy-third World Health Assembly - Joint Statement on rehabilitation and COVID-19

By the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, Humanity & Inclusion (also known as Handicap International), International Spinal Cord Society, International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics, World Federation of Occupational Therapists and World Confederation for Physical Therapy, supported by the Global Rehabilitation Alliance:

The COVID19 outbreak shows the need to integrate rehabilitation in health systems, in line with the WHO Rehabilitation 2030 initiative. Rehabilitation is an important health strategy for persons affected by COVID19, as well as for many persons experiencing loss of function and disability due to other conditions.

Rehabilitation is crucial to address the needs of people with severe COVID19 during the acute phase (on ventilatory support), the sub-acute phase (during hospitalization) and over the long-term (to optimise physical, mental, cognitive and social functioning). Rehabilitation shortens the duration of hospitalization, relieves pressure on acute care and facilitates long-term recovery.

This outbreak forces decisions about which essential services should remain operating. Health services disruption may lead to reduced capacity or complete unavailability of rehabilitation services, essential to the functioning and well-being of more than 2 billion individuals.

International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, Humanity & Inclusion (also known as Handicap International), International Spinal Cord Society, International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics, World Federation of Occupational Therapists and World Confederation for Physical Therapy, supported by Global Rehabilitation Alliance, urge to:

- **Incorporate rehabilitation in health planning in relation to both the rehabilitation needs of people affected by COVID19 and the other groups** requiring access to rehabilitation; adjust **health financing** to respond to increased demand for rehabilitation services associated with COVID19.
- **Maintain, at the hospital level, early rehabilitation care** for injured people or with newly acquired impairments (to improve functioning and avoid secondary conditions), in strict compliance with prevention measures in place.
- **Provide equitable access to tele-rehabilitation**, as a critical modality to continue providing an essential health service to those who need it, during a time of restrictions and overloaded health service.