



Policy statement

Female genital mutilation

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) opposes all forms of female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM is a fundamental violation of girls' and women's rights, including the right to life, the right to physical integrity and the right to health. In the absence of any medical necessity, FGM subjects girls and women to health risks and has life-threatening consequences. Further, it contravenes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and violates the fundamental ethical principle of "do no harm".¹⁻² WCPT advocates that physical therapists should be aware that this practice has serious physical and mental health consequences.

FGM, often referred to as "female circumcision", comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural, religious or other non-therapeutic reasons. WCPT recognises that change in this practice may require time and great sensitivity to culturally accepted norms, but that every effort should be made to protect girls and women from FGM and to educate and modify behaviour to bring about its elimination.

The World Health Organization (WHO), together with a wide range of international organisations including WCPT, maintain the view that there is no justification for FGM.¹

WCPT recognises the important role that the International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Women's Health has played in raising awareness of this issue. WCPT offers its full support to its position statement on FGM.³

Further, WCPT supports:

- the global strategy to stop health care providers from performing female genital mutilation⁴
- the joint WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA policy statement on FGM that promotes policy development and action at the global, regional and national level
- the Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation⁵
- the World Medical Association Statement on FGM and its Resolution on Violence Against Women and Children⁶⁻⁷

- the International Confederation of Midwives Statement on Female Genital Mutilation⁸
- the Stop FGM Campaign⁹

WCPT urges all member organisations to join national and international efforts to oppose and eliminate this practice and believes that only through international collaboration will efforts to eliminate FGM be realised.

Approval, review and related policy information	
Date adopted:	Approved at the 16th General Meeting of WCPT June 2007. Revised and re-approved at the 17th General Meeting of WCPT June 2011.
Date for review:	2015
Related WCPT policies:	WCPT policy statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torture • Ethical responsibilities of physical therapists and WCPT members WCPT endorsements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Convention on the Rights of the child • UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

References

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2. United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York, USA: United Nations; 1989. www.unicef.org/crc/ (Access date 17th November 2010).
3. International Organisation of Physical Therapists in Women's Health. Position Statement on Female Genital Mutilation.: IOPTWH; 2006. www.ioptwh.org/pdfs/IOPTWH%20FGM%20Statement.pdf (Access date 23rd November 2010).
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5. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Within the framework of Stop FGM Campaign - Afro-Arab expert consultation legal tools for the prevention of female genital mutilation. Cairo, Egypt: The National Council for Childhood

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 8. International Confederation for Midwives. Position Statement on Female Genital Mutilation. the Hague, the Netherlands: ICM; 2005. www.internationalmidwives.org/Portals/5/2010/Position%20Statements%202010/13.%20Female%20genital%20mutilation.pdf (Access date 23rd November 2010).
 9. International campaign for the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting. Stop FGM Campaign home page. Stop FGM Campaign; 2010 (23rd November 2010); Available from: www.stopfgmc.org/.