

CONSTITUTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF SPINAL CORD INJURY PHYSIOTHERAPISTS (SCIPT)

THE MEMBERSHIP of The International Network of Spinal Cord Injury Physiotherapists (SCIPT) declare, in conformity with the Charters of the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) and the International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS), the following principles:

Autonomy: The role of SCIPT is to promote and advance the care of people with spinal cord injury or disorders (SCI/D) in order to help these individuals maximize their potential for recovery, independence, and return to participation in society.

Veracity: SCIPT is obligated to be forthcoming about the scope and capacity of physiotherapy to influence the health and lives of people with SCI/D; therefore, we will encourage scientific research and advocate for the use of evidence-based physiotherapy. We shall also strive to inform the people accessing our publications and materials about limitations and/or possible adverse outcomes associated with physiotherapy interventions. As healthcare providers, we shall demand ethical behavior from ourselves and our Membership.

Nonmaleficence: Above all else we will work to ensure that our organizational efforts produce no harm.

Altruism: As members of an international community of healthcare providers, it is our obligation to work to reduce barriers that prevent fair opportunities and education for physiotherapists working in SCI/D and fair opportunities and access to physiotherapy for people with SCI/D. It is also our responsibility to identify, develop, and sensibly utilize resources to correct or compensate for these various disadvantages. People with SCI/D are our partners in these endeavors.

Confidentiality: SCIPT members shall not author, publish, or disseminate any materials that breach the medical confidence of people with SCI/D.

Justice: We support the World Health Organization and other programs in their efforts to reduce health inequalities by improving social conditions that affect the health of societies.¹ To this end, we promote the idea that all human beings deserve to be treated with respect and to participate in shaping their own opportunities. We are guided by the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities² and the World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution on "Disability, including prevention, management and rehabilitation".³ SCIPT shall vigorously advocate for people with SCI/D by participating in efforts and organizations that influence health policy and the allocation of resources and by providing education and support to physiotherapists worldwide.

1. World Health Organisation, The World Bank. World Report on Disability. Geneva, Switzerland 2011.
2. Resolution 48/96: The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, (1993).
3. WHA58.23. Disability, including prevention, management and rehabilitation. The fifty-eight World Health Assembly.

Humility: SCIPT shall be mindful of the influence of our words and deeds, and we shall actively seek the counsel of people outside of our network.

Flexibility: Our network shall leave room for growth and change allowing us to adapt to the evolving needs of people with SCI/D and the physiotherapists who serve them.

The **Mission** of SCIPT is to reduce disability and promote participation for people with SCI/D across the globe regardless of income, gender, age, religion, culture, or access to health care. SCIPT acknowledges that 80% of people with disabilities live in low-income countries and that poverty further limits access to basic health services, including rehabilitation services. The SCIPT members declare that people with disabilities are important contributors to society and that allocating resources to their rehabilitation is a valuable investment. SCIPT recognizes the importance of reliable information on various aspects of disability prevention, rehabilitation and care, and the need to invest in health and rehabilitation services required to ensure equality of opportunities and good quality of life for people with disabilities.

SCIPT aims to develop educational resources and a free and accessible knowledge base to promote the physiotherapy care of people with SCI/D. SCIPT will work to provide this education free-of-charge to students, novice physiotherapists, and others involved in the care of people with SCI/D.

ACCEPTING THESE PRINCIPLES, and for the purpose of co-operation among themselves and with others to promote and protect the health of all peoples, the Contracting Parties agree to the present Constitution and hereby establish SCIPT as an independent organization which is an affiliated network of the WCPT and a subgroup of ISCoS.

CHAPTER I - MEMBERSHIP

Membership in SCIPT shall be open to all physiotherapists involved either directly or indirectly in the management, rehabilitation, or ongoing care of people with SCI/D or involved in the education and training of physiotherapists and related health professionals. It shall also be open to physiotherapists involved in SCI/D-related research, management, or policy development. Members may represent government, commercial, non-government, not-for-profit, charity, or religious organizations. Members will be encouraged to join their WCPT member organization in keeping with the policy of WCPT on its affiliated networks.

Physiotherapists may become Ordinary Members of SCIPT by registering on the SCIPT website (www.scipt.org) and at that time acknowledging acceptance of this Constitution.

CHAPTER II - ORGANS

The work of SCIPT shall be carried out by the Executive, The Board, the Secretariat, Country Representatives, and Ordinary Members.

CHAPTER III - THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive shall be composed of elected delegates representing the Ordinary Members. They should be qualified by their technical or academic competence in the field of SCI/D physiotherapy, be able to communicate with both the executive and the members-at-large in English, and shall be nominated from all SCIPT Ordinary Members.

The Executive shall consist of not more than three delegates, one of whom shall be designated as Chairperson, one as Vice-Chairperson (or Chairperson elect), and one as Secretary/Treasurer. These delegates should be nominated from among people most qualified by their expertise in the field of SCI/D physiotherapy regardless of country of origin.

The Vice-Chairperson will automatically move to Chairperson every three years. The first move will occur on the 1st January 2014, and then every three years thereafter.

If the Chairperson steps down before the completion of his/her three year term, the Vice-Chairperson will automatically become Chairperson at that time. The new Chairperson will have the option of remaining in this position for the completion of the current term and for the next term (i.e., for more than three years) or of stepping down at the next scheduled round of elections.

If the Vice-Chairperson declines or is unable to move to the position of Chairperson, then the position of Chairperson will be declared open, and all Ordinary Members and the existing Secretary/Treasurer and other members of the Board shall be entitled to nominate. All ordinary members shall vote for the new Chairperson.

If the Vice-Chairperson declines or is unable to move to the position of Chairperson and no other members the Secretary/Treasurer, members of the Board or Ordinary Members nominate to be Chairperson, the existing Chairperson may hold office for another year beyond his/her three year term. However, at this time another call for nominations for Chairperson must be made. If again, there are no nominations for Chairperson and if again the Vice Chairperson declines to move into the position of Chairperson, then the Chairperson may once more extend his/her office for a maximum of five years. The Network will be dissolved if no replacements are found after the Chairperson has held the position for five years.

The Membership shall elect its Vice-Chairperson (or Chairperson elect) every three years. The first vote will be completed by the end of December 2013. The rotation of positions will occur on the 1st January 2014 and then every three years thereafter. Voting will occur electronically.

The Membership shall elect its Secretary/Treasurer every three years at the same time as the Vice-Chairperson/Secretary is elected. The first vote will be completed by the end of December 2013. The rotation of this position will occur on the 1st January 2015. Voting will occur electronically.

If the Vice-Chairperson or Secretary/Treasurer step down before the completion of their three year terms, or if the Vice-Chairperson moves to Chairperson, then members of the Board may elect their replacements until the next round of elections.

The Executive shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

The Executive shall meet via teleconference at least twice per year. Special sessions will be convened at the request of the Board (defined in Chapter VI), or of a majority of the Ordinary Members. Special sessions may be convened at the request of other affiliated organizations (WCPT and ISCoS), Members of the Executive and Board will strive to attend the ISCoS conference each year for a face-to-face meeting. The only exception will be every fourth year when the face-to-face meeting will be held at the WCPT conference.

The functions of the Executive shall be:

- a) to determine the policies of SCIPT;
- b) to generate, review, and approve reports and activities of the Board and to instruct the Board in regard to matters upon which action, study, investigation, or report may be considered desirable;
- c) to establish such committees as may be considered necessary for the work of SCIPT;
- d) to supervise the financial policies of SCIPT and to review and approve the budget;
- e) to instruct the Board to bring to the attention of Ordinary Members and of international organizations, governmental or nongovernmental, any matter with regard to SCI/D physiotherapy which the Executive may consider appropriate;
- f) to invite any organization, international or national, governmental or non-governmental, which has responsibilities related to those of SCIPT, to appoint representatives to participate, without right of vote, in its meetings or in those of the committees and conferences convened under its authority, on conditions prescribed by SCIPT;
- g) to consider recommendations bearing on the health of people with SCI/D that are made by WCPT and ISCoS and to report to them on the steps taken by SCIPT to give effect to such recommendations;

- h) to promote and conduct research in the field of SCI/D physiotherapy by the personnel of SCIPT or by co-operation with official or non-official institutions of any Ordinary Member;
- i) to establish such other institutions as it may consider desirable;
- j) to take any other appropriate action to further the objectives of SCIPT.

The Executive shall have authority to make recommendations to the Board and Ordinary Members with respect to any matter within the competence of SCIPT.

The Chairperson shall be responsible for the overall running of SCIPT. He/she will represent SCIPT where appropriate.

The Vice-Chairperson shall serve as a technical and administrative officer of SCIPT. He/she shall be responsible for assisting the Chairperson and will take on responsibility of Chairperson when and if the Chairperson is unable.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall be responsible for receiving and responding to all correspondence, taking minutes of meetings, writing meeting agendas and posting messages to Ordinary Members. He/she will also be responsible for writing the newsletters and overseeing the budget. The Secretary/Treasurer shall also prepare and submit to the Board the financial statements and budget estimates of SCIPT. He/she may delegate these functions.

The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or his/her representative may establish a procedure by agreement with Ordinary Members, permitting him/her, for the purpose of discharging his/her duties, to have direct access to their various resources. The Chairperson and/or Vice-Chairperson may also establish direct relations with international organizations whose activities come within the competence of SCIPT. He/she shall keep regional offices informed on all matters involving their respective areas.

In the performance of their duties, the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary/Treasurer shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any authority external to SCIPT. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officers.

CHAPTER IV - THE BOARD

The Board shall consist of six regional representatives and may also include the immediate Past-Chairperson.

The regional representatives will be designated by the Ordinary Members from each of six territories (North America/Caribbean, South America, Africa, Europe/UK, Middle East and

Asia/Oceania). These six members must be residents of a country within their territories. They shall be qualified by their technical or academic competence in the field of SCI/D physiotherapy and shall be chosen from SCIPT Ordinary Members of their region.

The immediate Past-Chairperson has the option of holding an honorary position on the Board for three years after stepping down as Chairperson.

The Membership of each region shall elect its own representative Board member every three years. A Board member may re-nominate for a maximum term of 6 years.

Voting for Board members shall be staggered as far as possible. The initial order of turn-around will be:

- December 2012 - Middle East. First election will be December 2012 with change of position on 1st January 2013.
- December 2012 - South America. First election will be December 2012 with change of position on 1st January 2013.
- December 2013 - South Africa. First election will be December 2013 with change of position on 1st January 2014.
- July 2014 - North America. First election July 2014 with change of position on 1st August 2014.
- December 2014 - Europe/UK. First election December 2014 with change of position on 1st January 2015.
- December 2014 - Asia/Oceania. First election December 2014 with change of position on 1st January 2015.

Any region may nominate an existing Chairperson from a relevant organization to be its Regional Representative negating the need for voting. For example, the Regional Representative of North America may be the Chairperson of the Spinal Cord Special Interest Group of the American Physical Therapy Association provided there are no written complaints from any of the Membership within the region. Once a written complaint is received, then the position will be declared open and all Ordinary Members of the region may nominate. Voting by Ordinary Members within the region will determine the Regional Representative.

The Board shall meet by teleconference at least once a year and shall strive to attend either an ISCoS or WCPT conference each year for a face-to-face meeting.

The Board shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

The functions of the Board shall be:

- a) to give effect to the decisions and policies of the Executive;

- b) to perform any other functions entrusted to it by the Executive;
- c) to advise the Executive on questions referred to it by that body and on matters assigned to SCIPT by conventions and agreements;
- d) to submit advice or proposals to the Executive on its own initiative;
- e) to contribute items to the agenda of meetings of the Board;
- f) to submit to the Executive for consideration and approval a general program of work covering a specific period;
- g) to study all questions within its competence;
- h) to take emergency measures within the functions and financial resources of SCIPT to deal with events requiring immediate action
- i) to coordinate the SCIPT-related activities of Country Representatives within its region;
- j) to coordinate the election and turn-around of Country Representative within its region;
- k) to encourage and help Country Representatives communicate with Ordinary Members within their countries.

The Board shall exercise on behalf of the whole Network and the Executive the powers delegated to it by that body.

The Board shall have authority to adopt conventions or agreements with respect to any matter within the competence of SCIPT. A majority vote of the Board shall be required for the adoption of such conventions or agreements, which shall come into force for each Member when accepted by it in accordance with its constitutional processes.

Each Board Member undertakes that he/she will, within eighteen months after the adoption by the Board of a convention or agreement, take action relative to the acceptance of such convention or agreement.

Each Board Member shall notify the Chairperson of the action taken, and if he/she does not accept such convention or agreement within the time limit, he/she will furnish a statement of the reasons for non-acceptance. In case of acceptance, each Board Member agrees to make an annual report to the Chairperson.

Board Members shall report annually to SCIPT on the action taken and progress achieved in improving the health of people with living with SCI/D in their regions.

Board Members shall report annually on the action taken with respect to recommendations made to him/her by SCIPT and with respect to workshops, conventions, agreements, and regulations.

Board Members shall communicate promptly to SCIPT important changes in laws, regulations, official reports, and statistics pertaining to health of people with SCI/D which have been published in their regions.

Board Members shall provide reports in a manner to be determined by the Executive.

Board Members shall transmit upon the request of the Executive such additional information as may be practicable.

CHAPTER V - THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat shall comprise any technical or administrative staff as SCIPT may require.

The Secretariat shall be appointed by the Board on such terms as SCIPT may determine.

The Chairperson shall appoint the staff of the Secretariat in accordance with staff regulations established by SCIPT. The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff shall be to assure that the efficiency, integrity, and internationally representative character of the Secretariat shall be maintained at the highest level. Due regard shall be paid also to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

The conditions of service of the staff of SCIPT shall conform as far as possible with those of WCPT and ISCoS.

CHAPTER VI - COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES

Every country will have up to 10 Country Representatives. They shall be qualified by their technical or academic competence in the field of SCI/D physiotherapy. They can be elected in any of the following ways:

- a) by SCIPT Ordinary Members of the country
- b) by the Executive
- c) by an appropriately recognized SCIPT organization of the country

Country Representatives may remain in their positions for a maximum of 10 years. However, Country Representatives may be asked to step down at any time as deemed appropriate by the Executive.

Country Representatives will be responsible for disseminating information between SCIPT management and Ordinary Members within their countries. They will also be responsible for facilitating networking of SCIPTs within their countries.

CHAPTER VII – ORDINARY MEMBERS

Physiotherapists shall become Ordinary Members of SCIPT by registering on the SCIPT website (www.scipt.org). At that time, they will accept this Constitution.

Ordinary Members of SCIPT shall respect the exclusively international character of the Executive, the Board, and the staff and shall not to seek to influence them.

Ordinary Members will be entitled to vote. Ordinary members have the right to submit motions and amendments to the rules for consideration by the Executive and the Board.

CHAPTER VIII - COMMITTEES

The Board shall establish such committees as the Executive may direct and, on its own initiative or on the proposal of the Chairperson, may establish any other committees considered desirable to serve any purpose within the competence of SCIPT.

The Board, from time to time and in any event annually, shall review the necessity for continuing each committee.

The Board may provide for the creation of or the participation by SCIPT in joint or mixed committees with other organizations and for the representation of SCIPT in committees established by such other organizations.

CHAPTER IX - CONFERENCES

The Executive or the Board may convene local, general, technical, or other special conferences or workshops to consider any matter within the competence of SCIPT and may provide for the representation at such conferences of international organizations or national organizations, governmental or nongovernmental. The manner of such representation shall be determined by the Executive or the Board.

The Board may provide for representation of SCIPT at conferences in which the Executive or the Board consider that SCIPT has an interest.

The Executive or the Board shall endeavor to inform Ordinary Members of any relevant information, recommendations or guidelines concerning the management, treatment, education or training related to spinal cord injury.

CHAPTER X - HEADQUARTERS

The location of the headquarters of SCIPT shall be determined by the Executive after consultation with WCPT and ISCoS.

CHAPTER XI - BUDGET AND EXPENSES

The Secretary/Treasurer shall prepare and submit to the Executive and Board the budget estimates of SCIPT. The Board shall consider and submit to the Executive and Membership such budget estimates, together with any recommendations the Board may deem advisable.

Subject to any agreement between SCIPT, the WCPT, and ISCoS, the Executive shall review and approve the budget estimates and shall apportion the expenses among the Ordinary Members in accordance with a scale to be fixed by the Executive.

The Executive or the Board acting on behalf of SCIPT may accept and administer gifts, grants and bequests made to SCIPT provided that the conditions attached to such gifts, grants or bequests are acceptable to the Executive or the Board and are consistent with the objective and policies of SCIPT.

A special fund to be used at the discretion of the Executive shall be established to meet emergencies and unforeseen contingencies.

An account for SCIPT will be held at the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney, Australia but may be moved to a new location at the discretion and convenience of the Executive.

The Board has the discretion to spend up to \$AU5,000 per year without consultation of members. Members must be informed of any further expenditure within a year (year commences 1st Jan) and be given 6 weeks notice to submit a written objection. If any objection is received then all members will be required to vote on the expenditure. A majority of those who vote will be required to approve the expenditure.

The Executive or the Board may submit grant applications to fund activities of SCIPT. Any money received through grants shall be spent according to the grant. Money attained through grants will be except from membership approval.

CHAPTER XII - VOTING

Each Ordinary Member shall have one vote.

Decisions of the Executive on important questions shall be made by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote. The voting may be electronic. These questions shall include: the adoption of conventions or agreements; the approval of agreements bringing SCIPT into relation with other organizations and agencies.

Decisions on other questions, including the determination of additional categories of questions to be decided by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote, shall be made by the Board.

CHAPTER XIII - RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The formal relationship between SCIPT and ISCoS will be determined by The Board of SCIPT in consultation with ISCoS. The agreement or agreements bringing SCIPT into relation with ISCoS shall be subject to approval by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote.

SCIPT is a recognized affiliated network of WCPT.

SCIPT shall establish effective relations and co-operate closely with such other organizations as may be desirable. Any formal agreement entered into with such organizations shall be subject to approval by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote.

SCIPT may, on matters within its competence, make suitable arrangements for consultation and co-operation with non-governmental international organizations and, with the consent of the Government concerned, with national organizations, governmental or non-governmental.

Subject to the approval by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote, SCIPT may take over from any other international organization or agency whose purpose and activities lie within the field of competence of SCIPT such functions, resources and obligations as may be conferred upon SCIPT by international agreement or by mutually acceptable arrangements entered into between the competent authorities of the respective organizations.

Subject to the approval by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote, SCIPT may dissolve any relationship with other organizations at any time.

CHAPTER XIV - AMENDMENTS

Texts of proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be communicated by the Chairperson to Members at least six months in advance of their consideration by the Membership. Amendments shall come into force for all Members when adopted when accepted by a majority of the Ordinary Members who chose to vote in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.

CHAPTER XV - INTERPRETATION

Approved translated texts of this Constitution shall be regarded as equally authentic.

The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson may appear before ISCoS or WCPT on behalf of SCRIPT in connection with any proceedings arising out of any request for an advisory opinion. He/she shall make arrangements for the presentation of the information to ISCoS or WCPT for its consideration

CHAPTER XVI – ENTRY INTO FORCE

Subject to the provisions of Chapter III, this Constitution shall remain open to all Ordinary Members for signature or acceptance.

This Constitution shall be a living document subject to amendment by our Membership and their delegates.

Any Ordinary Members may propose an amendment to the Constitution. The proposed amendment must be submitted to the Executive in writing. The Executive and Board shall decide if the amendment should be considered by all Ordinary Members within three months of receipt. If so, the amendment will be voted upon by all Ordinary Members for ratification within five months of receipt. A majority of votes from Ordinary members who chose to vote in favor of the amendment will be required to ratify the amendment. The voting may be electronic.

Ordinary Members may become parties to this Constitution by:

- a) signature without reservation as to approval;
- b) signature subject to approval followed by acceptance;
- c) Registering for Membership on the SCRIPT website (www.script.org)

- d) acceptance.

Acceptance shall be affected by the deposit of a formal instrument with the Executive of ISCoS.

IN FAITH WHEREOF the undersigned representatives, having been duly authorized for that purpose, sign this Constitution.

CHAPTER XVII – OBJECTIVE

The objective of the International Network of Spinal Cord Injury Physiotherapists (hereinafter called SCIPT) shall be the attainment by all people living with SCI/D of the highest possible level of health.

CHAPTER XVIII - FUNCTIONS

In order to achieve its objective, the functions of the SCIPT shall be:

- a) to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international SCI/D physiotherapy work;
- b) to establish and maintain effective collaboration with WCPT and ISCoS, specialized agencies, governmental health administrations, professional groups, not-for-profit organizations and such other organizations as may be deemed appropriate;
- c) to assist Governments, community-based rehabilitation programs, health facilities, or academic institutions upon request, in strengthening physiotherapy services for people with SCI/D;
- d) to stimulate and advance physiotherapy services for people living with SCI/D;
- e) to promote, in co-operation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the strategies for the prevention of accidental injuries;
- f) to promote, in co-operation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the concept of universal design, including the improvement of accessibility of public places for people with disabilities;
- g) to promote co-operation among scientific and professional groups which contribute to the advancement of the health of people with SCI/D;
- h) to propose workshops, conventions, agreements and regulations, and make recommendations with respect to international health matters and to undertake tasks in co-operation (or by mutual agreement) with WCPT and ISCoS and are consistent with its objective;

- i) to promote research and the exchange of data and results in the field of physiotherapy for people with SCI/D;
- j) to generate open-access materials and promote improved standards of teaching and training in the physiotherapy management of people with SCI/D and other health, medical, and related topics;
- k) to provide information, counsel, and assistance in the field of physiotherapy;
- l) to assist in developing an informed public opinion on matters of health and inclusion of people living with SCI/D;
- m) to take all necessary action to attain the objective of SCIPT.