

20 March 2020

Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare
(Ministerio de Sanidad, consumo y bienestar social)
Madrid, Spain

Re: Health and safety of physiotherapists during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Mr Illa,

I am writing to you with an urgent request to issue a formal decree to ensure the safety of physiotherapists by forcing the closure of all private physiotherapy centres in Spain.

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) is the sole international organisation for physical therapy (also known internationally as physiotherapy), representing more than 625,000 physiotherapists worldwide through its 121 member organisations. WCPT was founded in 1951 and since 1956, it has been a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in official relations with the World Health Organisation.

WCPT is also a member of the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA). WHPA brings together the global organizations representing the world's dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and physicians and speaks for more than 31 million health care professionals in more than 130 countries. WHPA is calling on governments to prioritise support for healthcare workers in the front line against coronavirus. <https://www.whpa.org/news-resources/statements/world-health-professionals-calling-governments-prioritise-support>

The Asociación Española de Fisioterapeutas (AEF) has been a member of WCPT since 1974, and WCPT recognises AEF as the main authoritative voice for the physiotherapy profession in Spain. As a member organisation of WCPT, AEF has the responsibility to ensure standards for the education of physiotherapists and standards of practice for physiotherapists in your country. The association currently represents 6,318 members out of the 54,258 physical therapists practicing in Spain.

It is the role of AEF to ensure that processes are in place to implement and monitor practice standards and to ensure that those wishing to practise physiotherapy in Spain do so in a manner which is safe and effective.

AEF have advised WCPT that since the coronavirus emerged in Spain, private centre physiotherapists in Spain have been putting themselves at risk to maintain services in their communities, very often without the required personal protective equipment, such as masks and hazardous material suits that can keep them safe from infection and therefore able to carry on their vital work. This is an unacceptable risk.

Physiotherapy, as a health profession, has a critical role to play in maintaining the health and wellbeing of the Spanish community. However this task, during this unprecedented pandemic, will be impossible if the health and wellbeing of the profession is not urgently prioritised.

If your government cannot guarantee the supply of crucial personal protective equipment then I respectfully request that you issue an urgent decree announcing the closure of all private physiotherapy centres in Spain.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathon Kruger', written in a cursive style.

Mr Jonathon Kruger
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Asociación Española de Fisioterapeutas (AEF)