At the first-ever inter-professional and international conference on the regulation of health professions around the world, more than 500 dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physicians, physical therapists and government officials debated the critical importance of professional regulation as essential to safe, quality patient care. The conference was convened by the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)* in collaboration with the World Confederation for Physical Therapy.

The two-day conference highlighted the fact that profession-specific laws are under more scrutiny than ever before in many countries, and that often national health professional associations were not being consulted. Discussion also focused on the impact of international trade in services agreements on the public and health professionals and is important that health professional associations be consulted by governments prior to and during negotiations, whether regional, bilateral or global. It is critical that ministrs of health be part of any negotiations concerning health and the health professions.

Burton Conrad, President of the FDI World Dental Federation: “We expect the health professions as well as the public to play a major role whenever professional regulations are under discussion. We are confident that self-regulation offers the most effective way of protecting the public. There is no evidence to demonstrate that other modes are any better.”

Jon Snaedal, President of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy: “It is no coincidence that at a time when there is a shortage of health professionals around the world self-regulation is being challenged by governments. Limiting the freedom of health professions to self regulate should not be seen by governments as a way of solving the problem.”

Marilyn Moffat, President of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy: “The WHPA will build on this highly successful conference by providing information and tools for national health professional associations to strengthen self regulation and work with their governments. The World Confederation for Physical Therapy and the International Council of Nurses have already produced model practices relating to regulation that can be used as guides.”

Kamal Midha, President of the International Pharmaceutical Federation: “We should consider holding another similar conference to follow up the discussions we heard this weekend. The public needs to be aware that self-regulation is an effective way of stimulating good practice and preventing poor practice in the interests of the patient.”

The full recording of the conference is available via the WHPA website.

FDI delegates participate in the 61st World Health Assembly held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The FDI delegation contributed to discussions on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases: implementation of the global strategy, health of migrants, climate change, female genital mutilation and counterfeit medical products.

The FDI opportunity to discuss relevant health topics with key stakeholders. One key topic that was highlighted by WHA partners was task shifting, employing new health care workers to provide health services normally provided by health professionals, and the 12 guiding principles for the next FDI, which were recently issued by the WHPA and other partner organizations.

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