

## Early International Congresses of Physical Medicine in the XX century prior to 1950

It is well known that many physical agents have been used throughout history for therapeutic purposes and Sidney Licht, in February 1964, wrote in the Am J of Phy Med Rehabil, that the first international congress of one of these agents, Hydroclimatology, was held in 1886. He also stated that there were six international congresses of what today is known as "Physical Medicine" between 1905 and 1936, as follows:

- 1905 in Liège, chaired by Dr. A de Mets
- 1907 in Rome, chaired by Dr. G Bacceli
- 1910 in Paris, chaired by Dr. Landouzy and Dr. Béclère
- 1913 in Berlin, chaired by Dr. His and Dr. Brieger
- 1930 in Liège, chaired by Dr. I. Gunzburg
- 1936 in London, chaired by Sir R.S. Woods

Licht further acknowledged indebtedness in the compilation of this material to Drs. P. Bauwens of London, P. Farneti of Milan, J. Gunzburg of Antwerp, J. Michez of Brussels and J. van Breemen of Amsterdam.

It is not surprising that the term Physiotherapy was used for the designation of most of these early congresses because, during the first, second and third decades of the XX century, physicians who used physical agents for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures were recognized under multiple names: electrotherapist, hydrologist, physical therapeutics, physiotherapist and/or physiotherapy physicians and in some instances they were also included under the broad term of radiologist.

In fact, the expression "Physical Medicine" was first used by the London Hospital in England in 1921. In the USA, the official recognition of the term of Physical Medicine as a specialty with an independent Board took place in 1947, thanks to the efforts of a group of physicians led by Dr. Frank Krusen. It was at the sixth and last of these early international congresses held in 1936 that the name Physical Medicine was first used as an international congress designation, most likely because this congress was organized by L'Association Internationale de Médecine Physique et de Physiothérapie, which was founded in Liège in 1930 and ceased to exist during the Second World War.

The Second World War put a temporary halt on all international cultural exchanges. However, in February 1948, Dr. J. Michez, from Brussels, who had been an active member of L'Association Internationale de Médecine Physique et de Physiothérapie, felt the need to restart an international organization and, for this reason, wrote a letter to Dr. P. Bauwens, in London, which initiated the process leading to the foundation of the International Federation of PM&R in 1950 as described on the corresponding Section of the History of the IFPM&R.