

The Integration Process

In Toronto, in April 1988, at the time of the 10th International Congress of the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, a special meeting was held with attendance of representatives from the International Rehabilitation Medicine Association (IRMA), the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (IFPMR) and the Medical Commission of Rehabilitation International. The objective of this meeting was to develop policies in an attempt to coordinate the very often common efforts of these three organizations and to avoid duplication. It was agreed that IRMA and the IFPMR would have representatives on each other's Board or Executive Committee and that the meetings of each Society would be held in an alternative fashion every two years. To this effect the Federation agreed that the 1996 meeting would be advanced to 1995 and IRMA agreed to advance its 1998 meeting to 1997. The Medical Commission of Rehabilitation International as part of a larger organization could not participate in this alternating schedule, although it supported the principle of avoiding duplication.

In Madrid, in May 1990, at the time of IRMA VI, a second meeting of the governing bodies of IRMA and the IFPMR was held. At this meeting the desire to coordinate efforts and to avoid unnecessary duplication was reaffirmed. It was resolved that the International Congress of the IFPMR, after the one already scheduled in Dresden for 1992, would be held in 1995 in Sydney, Australia. It was also resolved that the two governing bodies would meet again in Dresden in September 1992.

In Dresden in September 1992, as planned, a combined meeting of the Executives of IRMA and the IFPMR was held. After some dialogue it was agreed to create an International Task Force to explore the possibility of merging or integrating the two Associations. The following members were appointed for this purpose:

J. Melvin, representing IFPMR, as Chairman.

M. Grabois, representing IRMA.

J. Jimenez, representing IFPMR,

A Muzumdar, representing IRMA

R. Oakeshott, representing IFPMR

S. Ueda, representing IRMA

In Washington, in April 1994, the International Task Force met at the time of IRMA VII and identified a number of issues to be resolved in the planning of a new organization. Dr. N. Ishigami became an additional representative from IRMA.

In Anaheim, in October 1994, the International Task Force met again and it was agreed to prepare a "Document of Intent" to be presented to the governing bodies of IRMA and the IFPMR in Sydney at the time of 12th International Congress of the IFPMR, March 27-31, 1995.

In Sydney, in March 1995, during the 12th International Congress of the IFPMR, the "Document of Intent" was approved by the governing bodies of IRMA and IFPMR. Dr. Peter Disler, new Secretary of the IFPMR, was added to the Task Force. Assignments were made for authorship of the various sections of the "Charter" to be prepared for the new organization. It was agreed to meet in May, 1996 during the First Mediterranean Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Herzliya, Israel. In Sydney, IRMA selected the Netherlands as the site for the meeting in 2001, but it was also agreed by the two organizations that if negotiations for the proposed integration were successful this meeting would be the first of the "New Organization", which still had no name.

In Herzliya, Israel , on May 15, 1996, the International Task Force met with representatives of the Board of IRMA and the Executive Committee of the IFPMR. At this meeting it was agreed:

(a) That the name of the new organization would be the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PHYSICAL AND REHABILITATION MEDICINE (ISPRM).

(b) That a "Final Charter Document" should be completed for distribution to the Counsellors of IRMA by March, 1997 for comments and that the revised document shall be presented to the Counsellors of IRMA for approval during the Kyoto meeting August 31-September 5, 1997.

(c) That the Kyoto meeting in 1997 would be the last one of IRMA.

(d) That the "Final Charter Document" should be distributed to the members National Societies of IFPMR by March 1997 for comments and that the revised version shall be presented to the Executive Committee and Board of Governors of the IFPMR during the Washington meeting of November 1999 for final approval.

(e) That the Washington meeting of 1999 would be the last one of the IFPMR.

(f) That at the end of the Washington meeting Dr. John Melvin would become the first President of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PHYSICAL AND REHABILITATION MEDICINE and the President of the Congress to be held in Amsterdam in 2001 would be nominated President-Elect of this Society.

(g) That IRMA and IFPMR would be responsible for their own expense until the end of the meeting in Washington in November 1999.

(h) That IRMA and the IFPMR at the end of the meeting in Washington would deposit equal amounts of money in a new account for the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PHYSICAL AND REHABILITATION MEDICINE.

(i) That any remaining positive balance from either of the two founding organizations would be separately deposited in a Trust Account to be used for Education and Development but not for operational purposes. That the administration of the Trust(s) would be the responsibility of a Committee(s) whose composition would be discussed in Kyoto in 1997 and finalized prior to the meeting in Washington in 1999.

In Kyoto, in August-September 1997, at the IRMA VIII there was a combined meeting of the International Task Force, Executive Committee of the IFPMR and the Board of IRMA. The International Task Force was informed that (a) the Counsellors of IRMA had approved the agreement reached in Herzliya in May, 1996, and (b) the members National Societies had responded positively to the proposed agreement. Therefore, it was agreed to proceed as planned, that is

(a) To have the Integration Document ready for approval by the Board of Governors of the IFPMR at the last International Congress of the Federation in Washington in November 1999.

(b) To prepare the first By-Laws of the new International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine.

(c) The congress in Amsterdam in 2001, planned as the Ninth IRMA World Congress, to be the First ISPRM World Congress.

William Peek, newly appointed as IRMA President Elect and to be President Elect of ISPRM in November 1999, was added to the International Task Force.

The International Task Force met again in Valencia, Spain, in May 1998, in Seattle, USA, in November 1998, and in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in April 1999. Among others, were discussed: ISPRM membership, finances, administrative office and communications, policy and procedures, and the nomination of the first Board of Governors of ISPRM. A nominating committee was established with members out of IFPMR and IRMA. It was proposed that the Second ISPRM World Congress would be organized in 2003 in Israel.

In Washington, in November 1999, at the time of the 13th International Congress of the IFPMR, the above mentioned documents were completed and approved. Therefore IRMA and IFPMR agreed to terminate their activities and initiate a new era under the name of International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine.

Dr. J. Melvin, President of the XIIIth IFPMR Congress, was elected first President of the new Organization. Dr. Ueda and Dr. Oakeshott were automatically elected Past-Presidents. Dr. W. Peek was elected President-elect, Dr. H. Ring Vice-President. Dr. M. Grabois and Dr. M. Lissens were elected Secretary and Treasurer respectively. After evaluating several proposals for the establishment of a central administrative Office, it was decided to postpone this selection until the next meeting of the Executive Committee in Athens in September 2000. Drs Disler, Grabois, Jimenez and Oakeshott under the chairmanship of Dr Ueda were given the task of drafting the operational guidelines of the International Education and Development Fund. Jerusalem was confirmed as the site for the 2nd World Congress of ISPRM and Brazil was elected as the site for the 3rd World Congress of the ISPRM. It was agreed that the Executive Committee will meet in Athens in September 2000 and that any member of the Board of Governors will be welcome to this first meeting. The event was celebrated with an "International Luncheon" during which the work of the International Task Force, the efforts of Past-Presidents and major activities and achievements of the two founding organizations were recognized. Dr. Herman J. Flax and Dr. Jose Jimenez were elected Honor Role members of the newly created ISPRM. Martin Grabois was awarded the Herman Flax Lifetime Achievement Award and the Sidney Licht Lectureship Award was awarded to Wynn Parry.