

The International Rehabilitation Medicine Association (IRMA)

Abbreviated version of "IRMA - A History" written by Herman J. Flax, M.D., President IRMA 1982-1986, IRMA Historian

The International Rehabilitation Medicine Association was founded almost single-handedly by Sidney Licht, MD in 1968. Dr. Licht wanted to establish an international forum where physicians from countries that had not yet recognized the specialty of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation could assemble to discuss their work. There was one agency, the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, dating back to 1950, that embodied the few nations recognizing Physiatry as a medical specialty. This organization met quadrennially and permitted open attendance, but membership was limited solely to recognized national societies. There was no provision for membership for countries that did not have a national society or for individual physicians. As a result, many bona fide physiatrists were excluded from membership in the Federation.

To remedy this situation, Dr. Licht proposed the formation of an international society composed of all physicians, regardless of their specialty, who utilized modalities of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in their practice. Accordingly, IRMA was organized in November 1968 by Drs. Christopher B. Wynn Parry, Jose Poal, William J. Erdman II, and Sidney Licht. The committee of four invited the Società Italiana di Medicina Fisica e Riabilitazioni to hold the first world Congress (IRMA I) in 1970. The Società agreed to sponsor this meeting in Milan on September 20, 1970. It selected Professor Guido Gastaldi as Organizing Chairman and Professor Silvano Boccardi as Program Chairman of IRMA I.

The first officers were the founders of IRMA: Christopher B. Wynn Parry from Great Britain was selected as President, Jose Poal from Spain as Vice President, Sidney Licht as Secretary and William J. Erdman II, as Treasurer, both from the USA. Subsequently with the selection of Italy as the site of IRMA 1, Silvano Boccardi became President-Elect. Juan Garcia-Alsina from Spain as Deputy Secretary and Pierre Lambert from France as Deputy Treasurer were added to conform to the Statutes.

The statutes of IRMA written by the founders stipulate: "There is only one class of membership. Membership is limited to doctors of medicine (physicians and/or surgeons), who are members of a national medical society of their country of residence or citizenship". This has been a bone of contention since the organization of IRMA. There have been several attempts to amend the Statutes to permit non-physician members but without success. European members have been particularly vehement in their refusal to permit the addition of other rehabilitation professionals, even on an Associate level.

There was much interest, curiosity and even trepidation over the organization of IRMA. On May 9, 1969, Mr. Norman Acton, Secretary General International Society for Rehabilitation of the Disabled, now Rehabilitation International, requested information about IRMA and questioned the need for such an organization. Kit Wynn Parry promptly answered, "...This Association is a new and independent organization. Although it has no affiliations with any other society, it does support the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. "Its main purpose is to bring together all physicians interested in rehabilitation of the disabled. It is exclusively confined to physicians, and it is hoped to attract medical men from a wide variety of disciplines." "A number of us have been increasingly concerned over the past few years in the fragmentation of knowledge about rehabilitation, but it is hoped by publication and Congresses, we can provide a forum where physicians from different branches of medicine can meet together to discuss different aspects of a particular problem. For example, we would hope that a meeting on head injuries would attract Neurologists, Neurosurgeons, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and Physiatrists." "The necessity for a separate organization of this type, which you question in the second paragraph of your letter, is, I believe, firmly established by the fact that there are already 46 countries that have joined this association including a number who are not represented in the International Society for Rehabilitation of the Disabled."

There was a close liaison from the very beginning with the International Federation of Physical

Medicine and Rehabilitation with Andre P.M. Van Gestel as the first IRMA liaison representative. IRMA and the Federation alternated their world Congresses so there was a meeting every two years. This permitted their respective Board of Directors and Council to hold biennial meetings during each assembly. I am, personally, positive that Wynn Parry's letter stimulated the International Society to rejuvenate its Medical Commission and promote it to equal status with their other commissions, because shortly thereafter many of the Board of Governors of IRMA and the Federation found themselves appointed to the Medical Commission by their respective country representatives of the International Society. This also provided additional IRMA Executive Board/Council meetings during the World Assembly and Regional Assemblies of Rehabilitation International.

The membership rose rapidly the first year to 700 members by September 20, 1970, the date of IRMA I. A directory was published and distributed at the Congress. Although the dues were kept at a minimum of US \$2.50 per year, it was no secret that Sidney Licht personally paid for many who either could not afford this modest amount in US dollars or who were unable to transfer it out of their country. Licht probably knew more practising physiatrists than anybody in the world as a result of the publication of a "World Directory of Physical Medicine Specialists" in 1960 with a supplement in 1964. As the Founder and first Secretary of IRMA from 1969-70, Licht, through his donation of time, energy and money, was able to establish a strong base that has held steady throughout all these years. In this, he was ably assisted by William J. Erdman II, the Treasurer. However, it was the skill and friendship of Sidney Licht with the large number of physiatrists throughout the world that brought them to IRMA I in Milano and Torino, Italy, the week of September 20, 1970 and kept the Association from floundering during those trying first years. His correspondence was enormous; and, whenever he wanted a reply, he would include the proper airmail postage from that country. Many of the correspondents complimented the U.S. Post Office, where they thought Sidney bought their country's postage. No way, Sidney picked up the postage during his travels. Later, when I was Secretary, each year I would receive beautiful first-edition blocks of stamps from the countries behind the iron curtain, especially Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Later, I found out that this was the way some communist-country members had paid their dues. I never used the stamps, because they were cancelled. I doubt I would have, because they were so colourful and picturesque and placed them in a stamp album as a keepsake. Until his death in 1979, Sidney Licht paid the annual dues of these philatelists and many more.

It is interesting to note that Italy achieved unity on September 20, 1870. Exactly one hundred years later on a warm sunny day in Milano, the first World Congress of the International Rehabilitation Medicine Association opened at Ospedale San Carlo Borromeo with the first meeting of the IRMA Council at 4 p.m. Knowing Sidney Licht, I can well understand that this date would be most propitious, because it brought together the two most important physical medicine societies in Italy. This was done by having the meeting first in Milano and then in Torino, each section admirably arranged by the local Society of Physical Medicine. Vico Bergamini was the Chairman of the Scientific Committee and Giorgio Valobra for the social program in Torino. Gestaldi and Boccardi did the honours for Milano. Thirty-five Councillors attended this meeting and revised the Statutes, listened to the reports of the President, Secretary, and Treasurer, elected new officers, and unanimously approved holding IRMA II in Mexico City.

Since the Statutes provide that the members voted to be Chairman of the next world assembly is the President-Elect until advancement to the presidency on the final day of the assembly, Silvano Boccardi became President and Luis Guillermo Ibarra Ibarra, the President-Elect. Yoshio Oshima, Japan, was elected Vice President, Juan Garcia Alsina, Spain, Secretary, Luis Paolinelli, Chile, Deputy Secretary, William J. Erdman II, USA, re-elected Treasurer as was Pierre Lambert, France, Deputy Treasurer. Members of the first Executive Board, Bela Egyed, Hungary; Emil Adler, Israel; Kamal El Sherbini, U.A.R.; Maurice Mongeau, Canada; O. Sengir, Turkey; Sanat Sarkar, India; Leslie Koadlow, Australia, and Marian Weiss, Poland.

IRMA I was judged a success by those who attended not only because of the excellent, thoughtful arrangements but because of the high quality of most of the papers read and the excellence of the scientific and trade exhibits. Most rewarding of all was the opportunity for physicians interested in rehabilitation from many countries to meet and share their experiences, a prime objective of IRMA. The social affairs were truly outstanding, especially the splendid reception that was held at the Fiat Museum in Torino. Without a doubt, these amenities established a precedence of magnificence and splendour that have characterized succeeding IRMA World Congresses.

IRMA II opened in Mexico City on October 27, 1974. It was planned to emphasise the broad perspective of disability throughout the world. Hopefully, this would create and reiterate the need for a continuous awareness by health providers concerning the importance of rehabilitation concepts in medical care. There were 1,644 registrants from 49 countries, the majority non-physicians. Luis Ibarra, chairman of the IRMA II Organizing Committee emphasized the role of rehabilitation in the social and economic experience of Mexico. There was a massive outpouring of fellowship and private and public cooperation that attested to the success of this Congress. Preparation and playing host to a world assembly was without doubt a maximum stimulus for improving the care of the handicapped and disabled in this country. The Mexicans outdid themselves in introducing the culture and customs of this Latin country to an international audience. The splendid social events were topped off with a formidable fireworks display at the final ball and banquet. It was truly awesome to see the faces of past President Boccardi, President Ibarra and President-Elect Zinn suddenly appear outlined in fireworks against the night sky. There was an enormous scientific program: 5 plenary sessions, 15 symposia, 5 instructional courses, 5 panel forums, 4 workshops, and over 30 scientific papers were presented. Some 317 speakers participated actively in the various scientific sessions. Eleven volumes of presented papers were collected to be sold for US \$52.00 to help defray the expenses of the Congress. I remember the huge number of boxes of unsold volumes that finally were delivered to my doorstep as a gift to IRMA. Very few were sold.

The Executive Council met three times under Silvano Boccardi. He spoke eloquently of the growth of IRMA, the magnificent organization of IRMA II and congratulated Luis Ibarra on the outstanding calibre of the scientific sessions and social events. However, he expressed disappointment over the lack of membership cooperation in responding to questionnaires and their failure to send items for publication in "News and Views". Ibarra expressed his appreciation and requested close collaboration for the future activities of IRMA.

This was the year that Frank Krusen, Philippe Bauwens, Guido Gastaldi (President of "IRMA I) and Carlos Gil Gayarre, all eminent physical medicine and rehabilitation physicians and charter members of IRMA, died. There were several new amendments to the Statutes: 1. Officers should be elected for a four year term and may be re-elected for a second period of four years. 2. The members of each country shall designate their counsellors. The membership committee will approve the appointments of questionable candidates. 3. The dues were increased to US \$3.00 per year, and members were requested to pay -four years in advance, 12 US dollars. 4. Spanish was made an official language in addition to English, French and the language where the meeting is held. 5. The IRMA Secretary will become the liaison officer to the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and 6. The Executive Committee was increased to eight members.

The 1974-78 slate of officers elected were: President, Luis Guillermo Ibarra; President-Elect, Wilhelm Zinn, Switzerland; seat of IRMA II in 1978; Vice President, Franjo Gracanin, Yugoslavia; Secretary, Herman J. Flax, Puerto Rico; Deputy Secretary, Joaquim Rezende, Brazil; Treasurer, William J. Erdman, USA Deputy Treasurer, Pierre Lambert, France. Executive Committee members were: A. Alvear Icaza, Ecuador; M. Blanco Arguelles, Spain; Z. El Bendary, Egypt; H. Glanville, United Kingdom; O. Hook, Sweden; F. Perera, Sri Lanka; and V. Susset, Canada. All the Council Members were re-elected.

IRMA III was held in Basel, Switzerland, July 2-8, 1978. The outstanding symposia and workshops touched on virtually every subject requested by IRMA members. Worth stressing is the particular success Wilhelm Zinn managed to get drug firms, notably Geigy as well as others, to support the travel of world experts in all fields of medicine and surgery relevant to Rehabilitation Medicine to come to Basel and take part in the excellent symposia arranged by the Scientific Program Committee. The social and cultural events were many, varied and different; something for everybody. No one who was present will ever forget marching through the streets of Porrentruy, a beautiful, picturesque, old town near Basel, escorted to the Castle of Porrentruy by a group of majorettes and two marching bands dressed in sixteenth century uniforms.

All meetings started promptly as the Swiss custom throughout the Congress. Wilhelm Zinn had commissioned the noted Swiss musician, Willy Berghamer, to write an original composition, "IRMA Festmusik fur Grosses Orchester", which was played at the Opening Ceremony by the Young People's Symphony Orchestra.. Since there were a number of overlapping scientific programs of

interest to everyone, summaries of the main sessions were read at the end of the Congress in a plenary session, so that every IRMA participant was able to get a review of the whole main program.

There was greater contact with the United Nations, and the UN proclamation, " 1981 – The International year for Disabled Persons", was introduced by Mr. Esko Kosunen to most of the members, who pledged the cooperation of their nations. There were liaison committee meetings with the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and during IRMA III there was a serious attempt to bring together representatives of international agencies interested in rehabilitation. The Executive Committee also approved the admission of IRMA into the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences. CIOMS is the medical arm of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1976, CIOMS was a scientific community of biomedical sciences comprised of 68 international societies and 22 national bodies, which met several times yearly in Geneva to discuss medical topics and to help solve problems referred by WHO. At this time, CIOMS was interested in the study of medical education models. As an international member, IRMA would have an opportunity to participate in the establishment of educational systems in medical and ancillary medical schools. Hans-Jung Hachen was appointed liaison representative to CIOMS. The Executive Board decided not to request admission of IRMA into the Council of World Organizations Interested in the Handicapped (CWOIH) at the present time, because it was an organization made up for the most part of non-medical societies. In keeping with the Statutes, the committee voted to maintain a liaison and hold meetings only with organizations that are medically oriented, such as the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the Medical Commission of Rehabilitation International.

"News and Views", the IRMA Bulletin, was published three times yearly after January 1975 despite the lack of information received by the Secretary from the members. Printing and postage had increased the cost of each addition to approximately US \$700.00 without counting the vast amount of time spent by the Editor and his secretaries in getting each Bulletin published and mailed under the cheapest tariff. Flax, as did Garcia Alsina before him, breathed a profound sigh of relief upon relinquishing the responsibility of "News and Views" to the newly elected Secretary, Christopher Evans, in 1978.

IRMA III was without a doubt the turning point in establishing IRMA as the most important medical organization relating to international rehabilitation medicine. There were now 1521 members from 62 nations, an increase of nearly 850 members since 1974. They were all included in the IRMA membership directory that was prepared for IRMA III, thanks to a grant from the Jobst Institute of Toledo, Ohio, USA. The Treasurer reported a balance of \$3600.00 as of July, 1978. To bolster the funds, Ibarra donated the remaining copies of "The Proceedings of IRMA II" held in Mexico in 1974, some 11 volumes, which were made available for US \$52 including postage for each set. Also, beautifully embossed official IRMA membership certificates donated by the Mexican delegation, printed in Latin with the handwritten name of the member, were also made available during IRMA III. These could be purchased from the Treasurer for US \$15 by all paid-up members.

The Executive Board and the Council Assembly voted to accept "International Rehabilitation Medicine" as the official IRMA Journal. Philip J.R. Nichols of Oxford, England became editor. Co-editors were: Philip H.N. Wood of Manchester, England and Wilhelm M. Zinn of Bad Ragaz, Switzerland. The publisher was EULAR, Basel. The Editorial Board was composed of R.C.B. Aitken, Edinburgh; H.J. Hacken, Geneva; and C.B. Wynn Parry, London, Assistant Editor. Volume 1, No. 1 was distributed gratis at IRMA III. The journal was to be published quarterly starting in April, 1979. The cost was 30 Swiss Francs to IRMA members. Others paid SFr 36 in Europe and SFr 46 elsewhere in the world. The IRMA Secretariat was consequently established in Basel in November, 1980, and Mr. Hugo Stultz, EULAR Publisher of the Journal, became the IRMA administrative secretary.

The Statutes of IRMA were amended to reflect the times and offer a formal governing structure worthy of an important international medical association. The first Honorary Membership was conferred by the Executive Board on the Founder, Sidney Licht. The recent death of his wife, Elizabeth, kept Sidney from IRMA III, but the special certificate was delivered to him personally by Herman Flax. Four countries were interested in bidding for the side of IRMA IV. After listening to representatives from the interested countries, the assembly voted in favour of Puerto Rico for IRMA IV in 1982.

The following members of the Executive Board were elected for the term 1978-82: President, Wilhelm M. Zinn, Switzerland; President-Elect, Herman J. Flax, Puerto Rico, USA; Past President, Luis G.

Ibarra, Mexico; Vice President, George G. Burniston, Australia; Secretary, Christopher Evans, United Kingdom; Deputy Secretary, Joaquim Rezende, Brazil; Treasurer, William J. Erdman II, USA; Deputy Treasurer, Pierre Larnbert, France; Members: M.G.P. Cameron, Canada; Miguel Rangel, Columbia; W. Schmidt Kessen, German Federal Republic; Luigi Caidana, Italy; H. Wilmot Denis, Jr., Liberia, West Africa; Iwao Yokoyama, Japan; Usah Daramond, Thailand; and Franjo Gracanin, Yugoslavia. The President-Elect, Herman J. Flax became the Chairman of the Organizing Committee for IRMA IV in San Juan, Puerto Rico, USA.

The year 1979 was a tragic one for IRMA. Both Sidney Licht and Philip Nichols died. Sidney was not only the founder of IRMA, but he was also the sustaining element that kept IRMA afloat with sagacious advice and financial support.

IRMA IV was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in April 1982.

In his Presidential address before the IRMA council on April 21, 1982, Wilhelm Zinn alluded to the theme of IRMA IV, "New Frontiers that Influence Disease and Rehabilitation", and emphasized that "there are two frontiers that we are not prepared to accept: the first is the frontier between nations, which IRMA crosses so successfully; and the second, and even more important, is the barrier which separates the able-bodied from the handicapped." He urged the members, councillors and officers to push back the frontiers and to take down the barriers of disability. The philosophy behind the Congress successfully reflected the policies of IRMA. Special recognition for their financial support was given to the Governor of Puerto Rico and Mayor of San Juan as well as the World Rehabilitation Fund for supporting the attendance of many doctors from Latin America. The Governor of Puerto Rico, Honourable Carlos Romero Barcelo, and his wife hosted a perfect Puerto Rican fiesta in the gardens of "La Fortaleza", the oldest governor's mansion in the Western Hemisphere. The Mayor of San Juan, Honorable Hernn Padilla, MD, married to a physiatrist and IRMA member, presented to Wilhelm Zinn the "Key of the City of San Juan", that opened all doors for a glorious week of fiesta and folklore. The Sidney Licht, MD Memorial lecture was established by the IRMA IV Organizing Committee. Howard A. Rusk, the instigator of Rehabilitation Medicine as we know it today, was the first lecturer. There were liaison meetings with the World Health Organization, UN representatives, the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and the Medical Commission of Rehabilitation International. The main topic discussed was the WHO Red book on "International Classification of Impairment, Disabilities and Handicaps." Philip N. N. Wood, the IRMA Journal Editor, is the main author of this book. WHO representatives requested the assistance of IRMA and the other international organization's member societies to promote the ratification and the use of this standard nomenclature in their respective countries.

IRMA V was decided to be held in Manila, The Philippines, in 1986.

The 1982-86 Executive Board was elected: President, Herman J. Flax, Puerto Rico; President-Elect, Tyrone M. Reyes, The Philippines; Past President, Wilhelm M. Zinn, Switzerland; Vice President, Jean-Pierre Held, France; Hon. Secretary, Martin Grabois, USA; Deputy Secretary, Iwao Yokoyama, Japan; Hon. Treasurer, Chris D. Evans, England; Deputy Treasurer, Jean Pierre Ribeyre, France; Editor, Journal International Rehabilitation, Philip H.N. Wood, England; Deputy Editor, A.K. Clarke, England (alternate); Members: Silvano Boccardi, Italy; M.G. Peter Cameron, Canada; Usha Daranod, Thailand; Franjo Gracanin, Yugoslavia; Kurt-Alphons Jochheim, Federal Republic of Germany; A.M. Munir, Egypt; Robert J. Oakeshott, Australia; and Luis C. Ruiz, Mexico.

An Executive Board Meeting and Councillors' Assembly was held in Jerusalem, Israel on May 16, 1984 on occasion of the IXth International Congress of the IFPMR.

At that time there were about 500 paid-up members. IRMA had a distinguished scientific journal that was quoted repeatedly in the best medical literature albeit with a narrow circulation. For the first time, component sections from different medical and surgical specialties utilizing medical rehabilitation were organized. These were tough years, although we had achieved, perhaps surpassed, IRMA's objectives of promoting the incorporation of medical rehabilitation into health care programs throughout the world. Martin Grabois, the Honourable Secretary, deserves special recognition as does Philip Wood, Editor of the Journal for their untiring effort in keeping IRMA afloat. Unfortunately, IRMA was not economically solvent because of limited membership. The world was in an economic mess, and there was much political agitation that kept the Iron Curtain tightly closed and the third-world countries poor, all working against the necessary

increase of dues paying members. "News and Views" was incorporated in the Journal, and this curtailed the distribution of information to many parts of the world. There was also some agitation for the return to the \$3 US dues state and separate "News and Views" Bulletins. This was foolhardy, considering the scientific importance of the Journal, not to mention the impossibility to publish and mail "News and Views" to members for this amount.

IRMA V in Manila, February 16-21, 1986 was a moveable feast in spite of the revolution that toppled the Philippine President, Ferdinand Marcos, during the same week of the Congress. Special recognition must be given to the IRMA V Organizing Committee, which prepared a truly great Congress despite the difficult days, made even more calamitous by the unfavourable reporting in the newspapers and over television concerning the political situation and caused hundreds of confirmed delegates and speakers to cancel at the last moment. Despite initial fears and contrary to the adverse publicity all over the world, IRMA V was celebrated in a peaceful and tranquil ambience. The spirit of international friendship and brotherhood prevailed throughout the entire Congress. IRMA V was a magnificent and fabulous international medical meeting. Tyrone and Ofelia Reyes are to be congratulated on the outstanding success of IRMA V, the first, great international rehabilitation medicine meeting in the Pan-Pacific region.

During IRMA V, the Executive Board at the insistence of the Council Assembly terminated the contract with EULAR, publisher of the Journal, International Rehabilitation Medicine, in 1987, because EULAR requested an increase in subscription from SFr 68.85 to SFr 100. Membership had dropped to a low of 465 in 1985, due to world inflation and the difficulty in converting local currency into US Dollars. After this time, IRMA's Bulletin, "News and Views", was edited and published in Houston, Texas by Donna Jones, who became the Administrative Secretariat. The annual dues were lowered to US \$10. IRMA VI was decided to be held in Madrid, Spain, in June 1990.

The members of the IRMA Executive Board elected in Manila for 1986-90 were: President: Tyrone M. Reyes, The Philippines; President-Elect: Arturo Molina Ariño, Spain; Past- President: Herman J. Flax, Puerto Rico; Vice-President, Satoshi Ueda, Japan; Hon. Secretary: Martin Grabois, USA; Deputy Secretary: Hans Jung Hachen, Switzerland; Hon. Treasurer: Kurt-Alphons Jochheim, Federal Republic of Germany; Deputy Treasurer, Adriana Rebaza Flores, Peru; Philip H.N. Wood, Editor JIRM, England; and Anthony Clarke, Deputy Editor JIRM, England (Alternate). Additional members were: Charles Godfrey, Canada; Siegfried Rost, Sweden; Robert Oakeshott, Australia; Platon Hatoum, Saudi Arabia; Zeev Grosswasser, Israel; Thramrongrat Keokarn, Thailand; Dennis Smith, Australia; and, Crista Seidel, German Democratic Republic. Dr. Hans Jung Hachen was reappointed IRMA's liaison to CIOMS.

IRMA VI in Madrid, Spain, June 17-22, 1990 was a roaring success under the able organization of Arturo Molina Ariño and Juan Parreño Rodríguez. There were roughly 1,150 delegates from 61 countries, 650 coming from outside Spain. The scientific sessions touched on all phases of Rehabilitation Medicine, and the social activities, typical of the culture and hospitality of Spain, were enjoyed by all. There were 64 exhibits of equipment and pharmaceutical products relating to rehabilitation medicine. Spain had come a long way in rehabilitation medicine, as was shown eloquently.

By that time many favourable changes had been forged such as relinquishing the Journal in 1987, and building up a larger membership at US \$10 dues. In March 1986, IRMA had about 500 members in 71 countries; as of June 11, 1990, there were 2004 members (60% paid) and 35 corporate members. This was the result of trips made by President Reyes and the efforts of Robert Oakeshott and Satoshi Ueda, Co-Chairmen of the Membership Committee. The corporate members rose from 4 in 1988 to 35 in 1990, 4 from the USA and 31 from Japan. The IRMA Information Brochure was now translated into Spanish, French, German, and Japanese. In order to assist members in countries where foreign exchange was difficult or restricted, a special fund of US \$1,000 was started. This was a generous donation from Norwich-Eaton Pharmaceutical Company through Mr. Perry Owens that was used to subsidize the membership fees of a selected number of physicians from these countries. New certificates of membership were printed. Also, in Japan and Spain, payment of membership dues was collected locally and sent in a lump sum to the Administrative Secretariat.

A new innovation was the publication of 1988 of the first IRMA Monograph: "Myofascial Pain Syndromes: by Dr. David G. Simons that was sponsored by Gebauer Chemical Company. It was sent to all members free of charge. The second, "Cognitive and Behavioural Changes following Traumatic Brain Injury" by Drs. Zeev Grosswasser and Max J. Stern, was partially underwritten by New Medico Healthcare System and mailed in the Spring of 1990. There are several more monographs pending sponsorship to cover the costs of publication and postage.

Another project started by Dr. Reyes under Dr. Sheldon Berrol was the International Exchange of Experts in Rehabilitation Medicine. This program had three objectives: 1. Speakers Bureau, 2. Exchange visits of International Rehabilitation Medicine Experts, and 3. Cooperative efforts in patient care and research. The Philippines, Indonesia and Australia cooperated in the initial program with great success.

There was a complete revision of IRMA's Statutes by Tony Clarke, which was presented to the Executive Board in 1988 and ratified during the meeting in Madrid, in 1990. The IRMA Administrative Office was established in Houston in 1988 under the directorship of Donna Jones, who took care of all the administrative business of IRMA including the membership and the publication of "News and Views". The Executive Board is greatly indebted to Donna for her untiring effort that kept IRMA afloat during these trying years.

In 1990, the Administrative Secretariat was shifted to Madrid under Dr. Juan Parreño Rodriguez. However, a membership sub office was left in Houston under Donna Jones mainly for billing, collecting dues and maintaining the IRMA bank account with appropriate auditing.

IRMA VII was decided to be held in Washington, DC, USA, April 9-16, 1994.

The Executive Board for 1990-94 was as follows: President: Arturo Molina Ariño, Spain; Past-President: Tyrone M. Reyes, The Philippines; President-Elect: Martin Grabois, USA; Executive Vice-President: Jose Jimenez, Canada; Secretary: Juan Parreño Rodriguez, Spain; Deputy Secretary: Thomas Strax, USA; Treasurer: Anthony Clarke, Great Britain. Member at large were: Vice President for North America: A.S. Muzumdar, Canada; Vice-President for Latin America and the Caribbean: Adriana Rebaza, Peru; Vice-President for Europe: William Peek, The Netherlands; Vice-President for Africa and the Near East: Platon Hatoum, Saudi Arabia; Vice President for Asia and Pacific Nations: Robert Oakeshott, Australia. Additional Board members were: Satoshi Ueda, Japan; Zeev Grosswasser, Israel; Fernando Sotelano, Argentina; and Thamrongrat Keokarn, Thailand. Liaison: Representatives were: Dieter Reinhold, Germany, to the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; and Veikko Kallio, Finland, to the Medical Commission of Rehabilitation International.

At the meeting of the Executive Board in Washington, DC in October, 1991, Japan was selected as the site of IRMA VIII in 1997. This Congress date was stepped up a year in order to present an international meeting in alternate years from the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation International. The Board also approved Dr. Reyes' motion to allot 30 percent of the net earnings of future World Congresses, starting with IRMA VIII in Japan in 1997, to augment the coffers of IRMA. There was still some difficulty between the Houston and Madrid Secretarial offices. However, the Board decided to keep the two separate, at least until after IRMA VII in 1994.

IRMA VII, was held in Washington D.C., USA, April 9-16, 1994. Dr. A. Molina Ariño was unable to attend this meeting and for this reason Dr. Jimenez, as Vice-President, chaired the first meeting of the Board during which Dr. Martin Grabois, President of IRMA VII was elected President of the IRMA and Dr. Ueda, President-elect. The activities and recommendations of the International task Forces were approved. It was agreed by unanimity to create an award in honour of Dr. H. Flax, carrying his name.

IRMA VIII was held in Kyoto from August 31 to September 4, 1997. This Congress was held in conjunction with the Japanese Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and it was attended by close to 1,800 people representing all continents. The Opening Ceremony was a very spectacular show of Japanese culture and tradition with a garden party, drums concert and beautiful fireworks. There were multiple scientific sessions in all aspects of Rehabilitation Medicine. It was an elegant and memorable event to close the activities of IRMA and to open the gate to the activities of the proposed new organization –ISPRM.

During this congress there was a combined meeting of the International Task Force, Executive Committee of the IFPMR and 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 IFPRM member National Societies had responded positively to the proposed agreement. Therefore, it was agreed to proceed as planned (for more details, please see History of the Integration Process).