



## IAPDM: International DM association launched



photo by Stefan Boltz, HVBG

*The founding members of the International Association of Professionals in Disability Management (IAPDM), with the authenticating notary Ernst Brenning.*

*Front row, from left: Winfried Gehrke, Wolfgang Zimmermann. Back row from left: Helmfried Hauch, Dr. Hans-Martin Schian, Markus Taddicken, Gustav Pruss, Horst Günther, Ernst Brenning, Abdou Saouab, Dr. Joachim Breuer, and Dr. Friedrich Mehrhoff.*

**BERLIN:** To promote disability management around the world, a new international association has been created. The International Association of Professionals in Disability Management (IAPDM) was launched March 22 in Berlin, Germany.

The association's aim is to create a forum for disability management professionals to share experience, network and advance mutual interests where the well-being and reintegration of injured or disabled workers are central.

"A national organization has already been launched in Canada, and other countries will follow, so we're at the right time and place to set this up," says Dr. Joachim Breuer, CEO of the HVBG (the German federation of accident insurers) and chair of the new association. "The idea of disability management is an international one, so it's a logical consequence that there be an international association."

Breuer's vision is to bring disability management to the same level as other international social concepts such as poverty and security.

"There is a lack of recognition on the international level," he explains. "We must bring disability management to the political international agenda. The IAPDM will provide better platform for an experience exchange between international organizations."

Elected as the association's vice-chair is Abdou Saouab.

"As countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria, UK, Ireland, Australia, Singapore and Canada are moving towards the adoption and integration of NIDMAR's disability management curriculum and audit tool, there is an increasing interest in ensuring the highest standards possible for professionals in this field," he says.

Saouab notes that disability management statistics around the world (see page 2) prove that there is an urgent need for international attention.

"The situation overall is alarming and the socio-economic costs, as well as human costs, of disability are very high," he says. "One way of reducing these costs is through the development and implementation of disability management programs."

Our colleagues in Germany, under the active leadership of Dr. Breuer, have established the infrastructure of a well-integrated disability management program which, given the German economy and political leadership, will very likely influence the rest of the European Union. We are humbled and privileged of having contributed to the creation of the IAPDM.

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**Disability management statistics** (provided by Abdou Saouab):

In Canada, the 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey shows that more than 51 per cent of core working age (25-54 years of age) individuals with disabilities are employed, compared with more than 82 per cent of those without disabilities in the same age group. As well, 42.7 per cent of adults with disabilities in this group are not in the labour market, compared with 12.5 per cent of those without disabilities.

In the UK there are 6.8 million disabled people of working age, and about 2.7 million are out of work on benefits and about a million say they want to work.

According to CSR Europe, a leading European business network for corporate social responsibility, "A person in Europe aged 16-64 years has a 66 per cent likelihood of finding a job or developing a business. For a person with a moderate disability the probability becomes 47 per cent and for a disabled person with a severe disability the probability is reduced to 25 per cent."

Other studies show that the European Union had an unused labour supply potential of well over 23 million in 2001. Persons with disabilities alone represent a population of 38 million in the EU, but only 46 per cent of those reporting a moderate disability and 24 per cent of those reporting a severe disability are in work.

In Australia a total of 2.1 million people, some 17 per cent of those who are of working age (15 to 64 years) living in households in 1998 had a disability. Only 53 per cent of persons with disabilities are in employment compared to 76 per cent of the non disabled population.

"We cannot create an inclusive society without establishing programs and instruments that effectively lead to the employment, re-employment and retention of persons with disabilities," concludes Saouab. "Disability management as a coordinated approach, provides the tools not only for creating enabling environments, but also ways of measuring progress and for achieving benefits for the employees, their representatives as well as for the employers.

"Professionals in this field now have tremendous opportunities to have their skills and experience recognized worldwide. Given the increasing weight of multinationals, these skills will be the standard of skills required by the industry." ■