



*"We encourage and facilitate cooperation among all stakeholders in occupational safety and health and disability management, such as Government, the insurance industry, employers, employees, and professional and academic bodies, not only in Hong Kong, but also in China and other Asian countries."*

WAH-SHING TANG,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND  
HEALTH COUNCIL (OSHC)



Photo: First row l to r: Kai-ming Lee, Chairman of OSHC; Viateur Camiré, Co-chair of NIDMAR. Second row l to r: Shi-kai Lam, Member of OSHC; Tak-ming Lee, Member of OSHC; Wolfgang Zimmermann, Executive Director of NIDMAR; Wai-shek Choy, Vice-chairman of OSHC; Wah-shing Tang, Executive Director of OSHC.

## Hong Kong Offers CDMP Examinations – First in Asia



With an area of just over 1,100 square kilometers (420 square miles) and a population estimated at almost seven million in 2007, Hong Kong has a labour force of approximately 3.5 million workers and an enviable unemployment rate of just over four percent.

When it comes to labour legislation, occupational safety and health, and employment assistance to people with disabilities, Hong Kong exceeds the standards of most other parts of Asia. Between 1997 and 2001 alone, Hong Kong adopted 42 pieces of legislation aimed at improving working conditions with the goal of applying international labour standards wherever possible.

The Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) was established by the Hong Kong Government in 1988 as a statutory body for "promoting safety and health at work and sustaining the valuable workforce of Hong Kong through various services."

The Council's Executive Director Wah-shing Tang describes the OSHC's services, "Our functions are to enhance occupational safety and health standards and promote the benefit and value of disability management through an integrated approach that encompasses a number of different methods. They include activities to raise the public's awareness of the subject, the application of modern technology, education and training, technical knowledge, development of relevant strategies and partnership programmes, and consultancy services."

He adds that the Council's jurisdiction goes beyond Hong Kong. "We encourage and facilitate cooperation among all stakeholders in occupational safety and health and disability management, such as Government, the insurance industry, employers, employees, and professional and academic bodies, not only in Hong Kong, but also in China and other Asian countries."



Wolfgang Zimmermann was invited to provide the keynote address at the International Best Practices Symposium on Occupational Rehabilitation in Hong Kong organized by the OSHC in March 2008 and this was followed by the signing of a MOU, which provided the opportunity to offer the Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) certification examination in Hong Kong in May. The MOU was formalized when a License Agreement was signed for the professional certification examinations during the International Forum on Disability Management in Berlin in September.

To provide some background details on this historic agreement, OSHC's Executive Director Wah-shing Tang provided the following observations.

---

### **COLLABORATION WITH THE IDMSC**

Though disability management (DM) and return to work (RTW) is a new concept in Hong Kong, the Council sees the benefit for the entire economy; however, the challenges are daunting. There is no legislative requirement for employers to implement rehabilitation and RTW programs and the involvement in injury prevention and rehab by the private insurance industry is piecemeal. In a fast moving economy, rehab and RTW policies that do not yield immediate incentives are often side-lined by bottom lines and profit margins.

The Council is committed to making change by partnering with the insurance industry, business communities, professionals and government to make rehab and RTW programs the best business practice in Hong Kong. We are pleased to work with the IDMSC in bringing the internationally acclaimed training and certification for the CDMP and CRTWC to Hong Kong. These trained professionals will be the key drivers to work with the business and public sectors in implementing rehab and RTW programs.

Signing on as a strategic partner with the IDMSC is one of the best gifts for our 20th anniversary this year. We believe this collaboration will bring a positive impact to Hong Kong, as well as to the members of this network, in building a caring culture that values safety and health in workplaces.

### **DM AWARENESS IN HONG KONG**

The concept of return to work is not new in Hong Kong. The Labour Department of the Hong Kong Government launched the Voluntary Rehabilitation Program (VRP) for injured workers in March 2003, starting first with the construction industry.

The program provides injured employees the opportunity to receive free and timely medical evaluation, treatment and rehab services by clinics in the private sector by participating insurers who closely manage the rehab process. In the first year of the program, 224 injured employees were offered rehab services and 66 percent of them accepted.

The program was extended to the catering, transportation and manufacturing industries in 2004. The number of injured workers who participated in the second year of the program more than tripled, i.e. a total of 876 injured employees were offered rehab services and 91 percent accepted. Over 85 percent of those who completed the rehab program considered it helpful in achieving faster and better recovery.

In view of the success, the program has now been extended to all industries and currently a total of 14 insurers have participated. The participation of injured employees in the VRP is entirely voluntary.

Hong Kong has a no-fault comprehensive employees' compensation system, which is compulsory for employers, and as further protection, there is a scheme in place funded by a levy on the insurance premium paid by employers to assist injured workers whose employers have failed to purchase the required insurance and are, therefore, unable to pay compensation.





## DM LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE REGION

The OSHC has partnered with the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers (HKFI), a self-regulatory body of insurers, to recognize remarkable achievements by companies in reducing occupational accidents and implementing the VRP for injured employees, and together an award was launched – the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers Award for Excellence in OSH.

To further promote DM concepts, OSHC, HKFI and NIDMAR jointly organized a two-day intensive workshop in March 2008 to provide essential skills and knowledge for professionals working in the field. About 30 participants attended the highly interactive workshop.

The workshop was held in conjunction with an international seminar, Best Practices Symposium on Occupational Rehabilitation, where renowned practitioners from overseas and Hong Kong were invited to outline the concept of occupational rehabilitation and share their valuable experience on implementation. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

---

## BENEFITS OF THE CDMP AND CRTWC DESIGNATIONS FOR HONG KONG

The CDMP and CRTWC designations are fairly new to Hong Kong but through the workshop held with NIDMAR to introduce the new concept, and the international seminar on Occupational Rehabilitation, the Council organized a briefing to the Hospital Authority's professionals.

The OSHC became one of the international examining centres in May 2008, where six individuals wrote the CDMP examination, including medical doctors, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

Regular training courses will be arranged to help qualified professionals prepare for future CDMP and CRTWC certification examinations.

Most enterprises and rehab service providers believe that having certified professionals on staff is definitely beneficial to them. The designations give confidence to employers, employees and insurance companies, and assurances about the professional skills and knowledge of case managers and return to work coordinators.

## OSHC'S GOALS IN FURTHERING DM IN THE REGION

In signing the License Agreement, the Council's goals are to:

- Increase awareness of DM and RTW programs in Hong Kong, China and other Asian countries.
- Provide awareness for employers and practitioners regarding relevant materials and news from different countries.
- Arrange certification examinations for professionals to gain credentials that are internationally recognized and respected.
- Keep a close relationship with the IDMSC in assisting Hong Kong to build a better program on DM and RTW for those needed.

The statutory function of the Occupational Safety and Health Council is to provide education, promotion, research, consultancy and other services that help organizations of every size in both the public and private sectors to continuously improve their safety and health performance and best practices. It is encouraging to note that, through the collective efforts of all parties, Hong Kong's safety and health performance has improved significantly over the years and at the same time, employers' awareness on occupational safety and health has also improved.

We see that increasingly, more organizations in Hong Kong decide that they must address the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR), that it is important for them to behave ethically, and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of their workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. This holistic approach to business regards organizations as being full partners in their communities, rather than seeing them more narrowly as being primarily in business to make profits and serve the needs of their stakeholders. Through exercising CSR, the enterprise can boost its corporate image within the trade and among members of the general public, which will help enhance its competitiveness.

We will not be complacent on what we have achieved; we will continue to do our best to improve our safety and health performance. Working in partnership with our stakeholders, the Council will put in our best efforts, not only on the prevention and control of work injuries, but also to increase the awareness of disability management in Hong Kong.