



IFDM 2010 to be held in the United States



The International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions, based in Madison, Wisconsin, recently agreed to host the International Forum on Disability Management in 2010. The association is a not-for-profit trade association representing government agencies charged with the administration of workers' compensation systems throughout most of the United States and Canada, and other nations and territories.

"We want to become much more active in disability management programs," says Gregory Krohm, the association's executive director. "Disability management is relatively undeveloped in the US, but the states are keen on promoting it. The association is embracing this new-found interest and trying to become a more active advocate in disability management."

The event coincides with the association's annual convention, which will be held in the same city (tentatively in California).

"We are delighted to be part of the disability management community," says Krohm. "The organizers in Brisbane are very helpful, and of course the Germans organizing the Berlin forum as well. Many people have volunteered to help with the planning committee. They're so enthusiastic, and such luminaries in the field of disability management."

Chairing that planning committee is Christine Baker, executive officer of California's Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation. "Everyone - workers, employers and the public - benefit from appropriate, well-managed, and effective disability management," she says. "Improved return to work could reduce workers' compensation temporary and permanent disability payments, decrease workers' wage losses, cut down on indirect costs such as hiring and training; and lessen the potential for litigation. This forum will provide an opportunity to examine and gain knowledge about these important issues from an international perspective."

Also on the planning committee is Lex Frieden, senior vice president at TIRR (The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research) in Houston, Texas. "I think it's very important to have this international meeting occur in the U.S.," he says.

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“We have made some good progress, however, I think there’s an opportunity in the U.S. to reach the next level, in terms of better coordinating and coalescing the various interest groups around the concept of ensuring adequate workplace supports and opportunities around disability management,” adds Frieden.

Each IFDM builds on the progress made in the forums that preceded it. “IFDM 2006 in Australia will help prove the economic and social benefit of disability management,” says Dr. Friedrich Mehrhoff, head of the department of rehabilitation and international relations for the German Federation of Workers’ Compensation Boards (HVBG). “We plan to catch that baton in 2008 and run with it. And when we pass that baton afterwards, we know that the progress made in the 2008 IFDM will be built upon in the United States.”

2002 The first IFDM was attended by 400 delegates from 10 countries. It was organized by NIDMAR, and held in Vancouver, BC in May of 2002. The forum offered 24 sessions, and included Canada's second National Awards of Excellence in Disability Management ceremony.

2004 The second IFDM took place in Maastricht, The Netherlands in September of 2004. Organized by TNO Arbeid (TNO Work & Employment) and the Commissie Werkend Perspectief (National Committee Work Perspectives), the conference offered nearly 40 sessions on a wide range of DM-related topics to delegates representing 28 countries.

2006 The third IFDM will be in Brisbane, Australia in October of 2006, hosted by the Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine (CONROD) at the University of Queensland and Griffith University. More information is available at www.ifdm.com.au.

2008 The fourth IFDM will be held in Berlin, Germany, in September of 2008. It is being organized by the Federal Association of the German Insurers Against Work Accidents And Occupational Diseases together with the German Ministry of Health and Social Security. More information is available at www.ifdm2008.de.

2010 The fifth IFDM will be held in the United States, hosted by the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions. A planning committee has already been formed, and the host city will be announced at a later date. Further information will be posted on www.nidmar.ca as it becomes available. ■