I am truly sorry that I cannot participate in the XV Brazilian Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in October. As you are aware, I am the first physiatrist serving as President of the American Pain Society. Unfortunately, this year the Annual Scientific Session of the American Pain Society occurs at the same time as the XV Brazilian Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

Please take the opportunity to present greetings and comments to all Brazilian Physiatrist

A medical specialty involves when a group of physicians recognizing that a special body of knowledge, along with certain procedural skills should be nurtured and developed so that its benefits can be made available to patients whose needs are not being currently met adequately.

It is you and the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation that has met that need and continues to do so by not only adding years to life but life to years by improving the quality of life of the individuals we treat. However, the field has had to overcome the prejudices concerning physical medicine and rehabilitation by our colleagues which usually involves prejudgement. That is until they or their relatives or friends are in need of our services.

Today we are faced with the problem of trying to maintain rehabilitation services in developed countries, build rehabilitation services in developing countries and establish rehabilitation services within under-developed countries. We are trying to do this as the brakes are being put on health care costs. In countries with private health care centered programs this is in the form of managed care and in countries with governmental health care center programs this is in the form of decreased spending on social programs.

The field of physical medicine and rehabilitation has to reinvent itself and hopefully the new International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM), a combination of the International Rehabilitation Medicine Association (IRMA) and the International Federation of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (IFPMR), will help lead us through a new explosive phase at the international level.

However, stronger organizational national leadership will also be necessary, and of course, with explosive growth, there must be significant change. We must collectively view change in a favorable light and not turn away from it. We must do this at the same time as we continue to provide the highest quality of care for our patients.

What we have developed to date is merely the foundation on which we will need to continue to construct the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation. While we have accomplished so much, yet we are only on the verge of maturity as a specialty in many countries.
Doctor Arthur Abramson noted in 1972, that the field will have matured when patients and their relatives will not ask for rehabilitation services but automatically receive them as part of a comprehensive health care plan. That should be our goal worldwide.

Business as usual is no longer possible. Innovative change is necessary and necessary now. Remember the challenges are there. It is up to us to implement these changes.

I hope this Congress will provide you with the inspiration and information to make a difference.

Although I cannot be with you, I look forward to being with you and presenting at a future Brazilian Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

Thank You.

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