

**International Brain Injury Association**  
**www.internationalbrain.org**  
**Eight World Congress on Brain Injury 10-14<sup>th</sup> March 2010 Washington DC**

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This report provides an overview of the Eighth World Congress on Brain Injury, before focusing on a poster presentation delivered at the conference, which highlights the development of an international social work network in acquired brain injury.

The Eight World Congress on Brain Injury was opened by Nathan Zaslar, Chair of the International Brain Injury Association (IBIA) and marked the largest congress held by the IBIA to date. A record of over 1000 people registered for this four day biennial event, representing over 40 countries and with more than 650 abstracts accepted.

Dr Zaslar stated that not long ago it would have been impossible to get people from over 40 different countries together to work on, and promote, Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). Increasingly there is greater awareness and greater recognition of the problems of ABI survivors and carers and correspondingly greater resourcing and research.

A tribute was made to those who have contributed to improving the lives of ABI survivors. The IBIA itself influences political and legislative decisions, stimulates research, and contributes to raising standards in ABI, in addition to encouraging developments in the treatments and care of survivors and in supporting carers. Reference was made to the advances through neuroimaging, assistive technology, robotics, medication, therapeutic endeavours, improved rehabilitation and longer term care options and other advances. There is, however, much further to go in the quest to try to reduce the serious impact of brain injury. The world economy may have a negative impact on provisions for ABI if professionals are not vigilant to protect their efforts. Professionals were urged not to allow the pace of advance to slow because of this.

The congress was a mixture of keynote addresses, invited speakers, a multiplicity of free sessions and workshops over a range of topics. Some were research based and some descriptive accounts and some project based presentations, reflecting diverse practice across the globe. Poster presentations and exhibition stands had set aside viewings which encouraged interactive debate and discussion. To make the most of the conference therefore required concentration, stamina and planning, but delegates were rewarded with stimulating insights into diverse practice.

Considerable focus at the congress was given to the often neglected longer term needs of survivors and their carers, community projects and social care delivery arrangements in addition to a wide spectrum of clinically focused presentations. There was something in it for the range of delegates attending who represented every aspect of the professional spread of those working in the field of ABI.

My own poster presentation 'Building international networks to promote social work practice in speciality fields: The experience of the International Network for Social Workers in Acquired Brain Injury' (INSWABI) details the setting up, 2006 launch, mission statement, development, benefits and achievements and future proposals of this virtual group. INSWABI has inspired research, practice development and information across borders and across the academic and practice divides. These include the development of a new Family Outcome Measure; undertaking the first structured review of the existing social work literature

in the field of ABI; and developing a Psychosocial Assessment Framework for use by practitioners.

The poster was well received by clinicians, social workers, academics and others alike. The abstract, together with all the material presented at the congress can be found on the website at [www.internationalbrain.org/?q=node/16](http://www.internationalbrain.org/?q=node/16)

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