Dear participants in the Pan American Occupational and Environmental Health Conference - Rio 2018, I would like to welcome you, wish you a valuable meeting, and tell you a little about the path we treaded until reaching this historical moment of collaboration, integration and partnership.

While the current Board of National Association of Occupational Medicine (Associação Nacional de Medicina do Trabalho – ANAMT) was preparing its Strategic Management Plan for 2016–2019, it noticed the need for greater integration of the Pan American axis as concerns occupational and environmental health. For this reason, it suggested to the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM), USA, and the Latin American Association of Occupational Health (Asociación Latinoamericana de Salud Ocupacional - ALSO) to hold a joint meeting with the following aims: to strengthen networks and facilitate the exchange of experiences and partnerships among regional health, environment and safety professionals and institutions; share good institutional and individual practices; divulgate public policies and reference guidelines; incentivize multicenter research and training programs in occupational and environmental health; and identify common interests to establish partnerships and networks.

This challenging set of aims was summarized under the motto Gathering People and Exchanging Experiences on Occupational and Environmental Health, which guided the formulation of the program of the conference held in Rio de Janeiro from 27 to 29 September 2018.

The barriers resulting from the three languages spoken in the region were evident from the very beginning, as also were the different, variable and complex work and health situations, characterized by coexisting older and newer working conditions with impact on health and safety at work (HSW), in addition to the impacts of economic globalization.

Communicable (endemic, emerging and re-emerging) and noncommunicable diseases, as well as the ones related to urban violence, represent a triple burden, which together with the major advances in the use of health technologies, have impact on the morbidity and mortality of the population.

In turn, the increasing interaction between environmental and HSW issues favored the occurrence of major disasters and the judicialization of HSW.

Thus, three thematic axes were selected to organize the scientific program:
1. core competencies required for professional practice, which should guide the training and continued education of specialists in occupational and environmental health;
2. definition of assumptions and technical guidelines in partnership with public policy-making organs, public and private institutions, training associations and agencies, and development of multicenter projects and guidelines; and
3. subjects of interest for the everyday practice of occupational and environmental health professionals.

The International Occupational Medicine Society Collaborative (IOMSC) - which has devoted much effort to reunite national occupational medicine associations and promote better practices and wider awareness on issues and solutions to improve the health of workers worldwide - soon joined in by holding its annual meeting during the Conference, and thus be actively involved in the Pan American integration.

The initial round table meant to discuss public policies grew so much, that it became a Public Policy Forum. As a result, the relevance of this subject was given its due place.

Communication technology was extensively used along the preparation of the Conference, and is being tested as tool for remote participation of fundamental actors in the discussion of topics, the absence of whom would represent a substantial loss.
Thus was organized the Conference which will promote the integration of proposals and sharing of experiences, and suggest solutions to improve occupational and environmental health.

Rio de Janeiro, with its diversity, natural beauty, and hospitable and friendly population, provides a privileged scenario to the Conference.

Brazilian Journal of Occupational Medicine (Revista Brasileira de Medicina do Trabalho - RBMT) carefully edited the present supplement, which brings considerable individual contributions to the Conference. The conclusions and recommendations formulated in the three events, fruit of collective contributions, will be published in future issues.

In behalf of the Organizing Committee, I want to thank all the institutions which made this partnership possible, and the professionals who devoted countless hours of voluntary work to the planning and running of the Conference, for believing in the value of cooperation and sharing knowledge and experiences as a powerful tool of aggregation, personal growth and inclusion of the most vulnerable for the sake of occupational and environmental health.

Welcome to the Wonderful City, and good work!