



NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

We recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) each October to commemorate the many contributions of people with disabilities to America’s workplaces and economy. The theme for NDEAM 2024 is "Access to Good Jobs for All."

There are resources that can help your organization take part and specific ideas for how different types of organizations—including employers and employees, educators and youth service professionals, policymakers, associations and unions, disability-related organizations and federal agencies—can take part on the main NDEAM webpage.

During National Disability Employment Awareness Month or NDEAM, we celebrate the value and talent workers with disabilities add to America’s workplaces and economy. NDEAM takes place annually each October, but its purpose is to confirm our commitment to ensuring disabled workers have access to good jobs, every month of every year. That’s the spirit behind this year’s official theme: "Access to Good Jobs for All."

"Our theme in 2024, 'Access to Good Jobs for All,' speaks to our commitment to expand the number of employment opportunities for people with disabilities and the quality of those opportunities," explained Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy Taryn M. Williams. "Good jobs change lives and all workers — including disabled people — deserve the opportunity to prepare for success in high-quality, good-paying jobs in workplaces free of discrimination."

In 1945, the nation first designated a national week to recognize the contribution of people with physical disabilities. Designated by Congress as NDEAM in 1988, the commemoration evolved to acknowledge the importance of increasing the number of people with disabilities in the workforce. In 2001, ODEP was created and was given responsibility for NDEAM and for selecting and helping promote its annual theme.

WOHC 2024 PHOTOS



THE SECOND DAY OF WOHC 2024

WOHC 2024
Saturday August 31, 2024 / 08:00 AM - 08:30 AM

**“ WOEMA and ACOEM
President's Addresses ”**

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Akbar Sharip, MD, MPH, FACOEM

The second day of WOHC 2024 kicked off with an impactful address by WOEMA President Dr. Akbar Sharip, highlighting the urgent need for funding to support the training of occupational and environmental medicine (OEM) physicians.

Dr. Sharip stressed that without adequate financial backing, the pipeline for future OEM specialists will remain insufficient to meet the growing demand for this critical specialty. He called attention to the shrinking number of OEM residency programs, the aging workforce, and the funding challenges that hinder the recruitment of new physicians into the field.

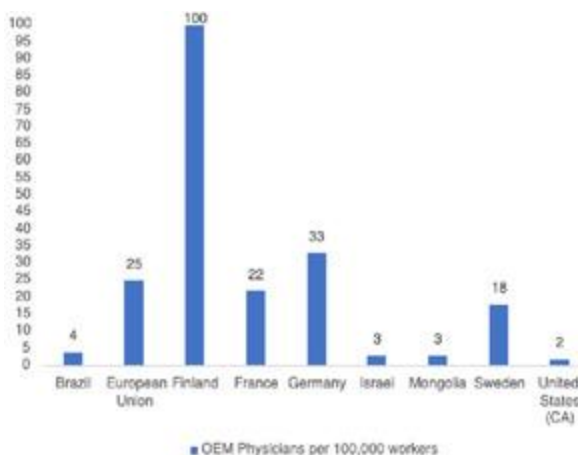
In his speech, Dr. Sharip referenced a critical report from 1991 by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), which indicated an additional need for up to **5,500 physicians** with special competence in Occupational and Environmental Medicine (OEM). As recently as 2014, the **National Academy of Medicine** reiterated the call for more funding to train OEM physicians, emphasizing the urgency to alleviate the growing shortage. Yet, despite these warnings, **no significant progress** has been made to address this gap.

In addition to discussing the urgent need for OEM physician funding, Dr. Sharip also highlighted environmental and climate change-related challenges impacting occupational health. He pointed out the increasing impact of climate change on human health, particularly in the workplace, and the necessity for OEM physicians to be prepared to address new threats such as heat stress, air pollution, and emerging infectious diseases. The rise in toxicant exposure, environmental disasters, and mental health stressors due to climate change were underscored as critical concerns for the future of the workforce. Dr. Sharip highlighted that without substantial investment and attention, the challenges facing the OEM pipeline will only continue to worsen, ultimately impacting the health and safety of workers across the nation.

During his address, Dr. Sharip also compared the number of OEM physicians in the United States with those in the European Union and other regions. He noted that the U.S. has a significantly lower ratio of OEM physicians per 100,000 workers compared to the European Union, where occupational health services are more robustly integrated into public health systems.

Dr. Sharip emphasized that enhancing the OEM pipeline is not just a slogan but a vision that can be realized with collective effort. He acknowledged the advocacy efforts by ACOEM and local stakeholders, noting that more states are recognizing the importance of residency funding. He closed his address with optimism, encouraging attendees to seize this moment to build a healthier, safer workforce by supporting the next generation of OEM physicians.

The consensus among attendees echoed Dr. Sharip's message, reflecting the urgency and significance of addressing this crisis.



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