



The designations of Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) and Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC), administered under the auspices of the IDMSC, are increasingly receiving global recognition as the standard for disability management practice worldwide.

Presentations took place in November 2012 for 33 CDMPs on both sides of the Atlantic, which has highlighted the need to improve outcomes for ill and injured workers.

Twenty one employees and management staff from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) of Ontario received their CDMP certificates in Toronto on November 28, while in Edinburgh, 12 successful candidates from Scotland's National Health Service (NHS) were recognized on November 30.

Professionalization in DM Advances Around the World



The WSIB cohort included Vice-President for Work Reintegration, Judy Geary. Geary, who serves on the NIDMAR Board of Directors, said that after years of promoting the professional designations to the world, she decided to undergo the process herself. "We were asking our staff – managers in particular – to devote a lot of time and energy towards undertaking the training in preparation for the examination," Geary said. "I felt it was important to be a role model, as a senior leader in the program, to show that I wasn't asking them to do anything I wasn't prepared to do."

It was a back-to-school experience on both sides of the Pond. According to Geary, "For some people, it had been a long time since they had been in a formalized learning environment where there were lectures to attend, plus homework assignments, exercises to do, extra readings and an examination." Twenty-one of the WSIB candidates wrote the exam, while three elected to postpone. "We wrote the examination on Halloween Day and everybody passed," Geary said.

WSIB chief operating officer John Slinger said the certification program demonstrated the level of commitment among staff to improving services and providing better outcomes for injured and ill workers. "The participants were enthusiastic throughout the program, and we're clearly proud of them achieving their CDMP designation. I'm pleased that the WSIB now has such a large number of CDMP designated RTW experts on its staff," Slinger said.

More importantly, Geary said, that even though every candidate had previous training and involvement in RTW, each felt they had learned a lot and had benefited from the program.



In Scotland, the fields of occupational health and safety, health promotion and vocational rehabilitation are overseen by the Centre for Healthy Working Lives, which is in turn, one of five directorates within NHS Scotland Health. For the past three years, Kathleen Houston, Development Manager for Voc Rehab, has recruited candidates to undergo CDMP certification.

Houston said the goal has been to integrate the skill sets of the various practitioners such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, etc., to allow them to work in multidisciplinary teams. "They all come with different levels of expertise. I'm trying to find that commonality – that starting place – for experts to turn their focus towards the workplace," Houston said. "That is what we were lacking in Scotland."

When tasked with putting together a set of pilot projects, Houston said she needed a training program that would put all the various experts on the same page. "I looked around at the various courses that could meet that need, and I was pointed in the direction of NIDMAR," Houston said. "That has been our baseline from where people would start from."

The candidates were required to attend full-day lectures and complete an assignment; many were required to negotiate time off work to complete the training, which ran between January and early May, with the exam at the end of May. "The social diary had to close," Houston said. "It's a high level of commitment from these folks."

Since 2007, Graham Halsey has overseen the delivery of the CDMP examination in the UK, which is offered under the auspices of the IDMSC. Like Geary, Halsey led the first group of UK candidates to seek CDMP certification, by undertaking the process himself. "It was my job to train the individuals through the exam, and, by the way, pass it myself." Halsey said that having lived through the experience himself makes him better able to shepherd candidates through the process. "The examination is a monster. It's seven hours long," he said.

In the UK, there are now 140 CDMPs from a wide spectrum of private and public organizations. Of those, 35 are with NHS Scotland Health. "In the UK, the CDMP is the only recognized vocational rehabilitation qualification. This is taking people working in the field to a new level," Halsey said, adding that in the UK, Scotland is taking the lead.