



For Cowan Insurance, CDMP provides name-brand recognition



IDMSC® International
Disability Management
Standards Council

The designations of Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC) and Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP), administered under the auspices of the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC), are increasingly becoming the accepted standard for disability management practice worldwide.

When Cowan Insurance Group sought to strengthen its Health and Disability Management Department, they chose the Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) professional designation. Susan Novo is department manager for the Ottawa/Cambridge area DM Group. She completed the certification herself in May 2013, for a total of five CDMPs in her ten-member team.

The Cowan Group provides a multitude of services, including benefits consulting, commercial and private insurance, auto and home insurance, as well as pension and wealth management services.

By contrast, Novo's department is a third-party service provider for employers, providing DM services as well as health and wellness education programs, pre-employment screening and occupational health services. As such, their focus is on getting ill and injured employees back to work in a healthy and supportive manner.

"There is no vested interest in getting that person back to get the claim off our books, because we are not paying for the claim. We don't know that employee – it's completely objective and neutral."

Novo is herself an Occupational Therapist and most of her department colleagues have a range of professional and medical certifications. Their role is to adjudicate the sick leave benefits and help direct those ill and injured employees towards the medical and support services they require to make a safe and timely return to work.

"There is a misconception out there that DM providers are trying to force them back before their doctor says they are able to, but we really look at the medical information and the work accommodation: what modification can we put in place to get them back as soon as they are medically stable and it is safe to do so?"

"As an OT, I really believe that engaging somebody in meaningful work is beneficial. It's better for us to be engaged in something meaningful, and we believe work is meaningful, so we get them back to work as soon as possible."

Novo's team includes OTs, Kinesiologists, Nurses, Occupational Health Nurses and Counsellors, each with their own clinical background and approach to life. So how best to get them all working in the same direction?

"We try to bring it all together, and that's part of why we thought that obtaining the CDMP was a great common denominator."

Novo said while Cowan looked at other available programs, they chose the CDMP route for several reasons, not least of which is its "brand recognition."



“The CDMP is recognized internationally, and that adds to its credibility. We looked at others that could provide courses, but in terms of a globally recognized certification, this was our best option.

“We are seeing more and more with employers – our client base – that they are looking for the CDMP designation.”

Novo pointed out that Canada Post requires its DM provider, Human Resources working with DM, and other employees involved in Disability Management and Return to Work planning to have their CDMP certification. The Ontario Hospital Association is also working towards increasing their CDMP numbers. Having those four letters, CDMP, attached to your name is visible proof that you have successfully completed a rigorous certification program that is recognized all over the globe.

Novo said for the five employees (including herself) who have completed their CDMP thus far, the objective has been to meet individual performance goals and by extension, harmonize team performance, rather than necessarily move up in the Cowan hierarchy. But there is also a cohort of more junior Cowan employees who are now seeking CDMP certification in order to advance their careers, she added.

“The only way to do that in our department is to obtain education and certification, and in this case, it’s definitely an option to work towards that goal.”