



An Ever-Changing Job Market Calls for Professional Certification



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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 professional standard for disability management practice worldwide.

Three individuals who achieved the CDMP and CRTWC designations illustrate the wide range of professionals who decided to enhance their career profile with internationally recognized professional designations.

Dawn Lawrence is an Occupational Therapist Team Lead / RTW Coordinator at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. Last year she added CRTWC to her credentials.

While Dawn trained as an OT, she worked as a professional dancer and just as in the world of dance, her career profile illustrates the need to remain flexible and to acquire new skills on a continual basis, especially when working in a private industry service provider. "Sunnybrook is a large hospital, but there is a component of the hospital that does fee-for-service work, mostly for WSIB."

Lawrence explained that she has been doing RTW for ten years and during those years, the terms of their WSIB contract evolved, which has meant employees at the clinic have had to make shifts in the type of services they provide.

Up until 2004, as part of the Sunnybrook contract with WSIB, injured workers came to the clinic for assessments by their team of surgeons and physiotherapists, while OTs like Lawrence assisted in RTW planning. Lawrence performed worksite visits to assess whether modified duties for injured workers were "safe or suitable" and whether specific job duties and work schedules were appropriate.

But under a subsequent contract, the WSIB brought in its own RTW specialists. "Under the new contract, they were no longer requiring that RTW be done through the specialty clinics," she explained.

As a result of the altered WSIB contract, many of the Sunnybrook OTs shifted into different roles, Lawrence said. "They still use the specialty clinics to do the consultation and treatment for the injuries, but not necessarily for return to work services. We still occasionally get requests from WSIB for RTW services when they need an outside opinion, so I still do jobsite visits for WSIB occasionally. We also now do that type of work for other organizations and businesses."

Lawrence began her OT career at Sunnybrook working in General Medicine and then in the Veterans Wing, doing elder care and wheelchair prescriptions, before making the transition into a work rehabilitation and RTW role.

Completing her CRTWC has not resulted in any change in her job duties at Sunnybrook, but she feels the certification has increased her credibility and, all things considered, her marketability.

"I include the designation in my reports. What it communicates is that I have taken the time and made the effort to increase my knowledge and skills. That was my reason for doing the program. I felt it was a good career move to make sure I have the credentials to support the work that I was doing."

The NIDMAR online training also exposed her to facets of the RTW field she had never encountered before, such as insurance industry requirements and disability management. Lawrence now recommends the program to other professionals, in large part on that basis.

"When you work in a little silo, you only see one piece of the puzzle, so getting exposure to the bigger picture is good. I now have a better appreciation of the work done by case managers and claims adjudicators for insurance companies."



When Steve Archambault looked into DM certification, he decided that the CRTWC designation was the best fit for him.

Most recently, he served as Bilingual Disability Care Manager at the Mississauga branch of La Capital Insurance and Financial Services, but in January, with his CRTWC in hand, he assumed the role of Manager of Disability for Individual Claims for Combined Insurance.

Archambault holds a Doctor of Chiropractic from the Université du Québec, Trois Rivières, but said the marketing side of the chiropractic field convinced him to look elsewhere for a professional career. “Even during my clinical rotation, I had to find my own patients,” he said.

He was completing his chiropractic residency, pondering his options, when the clinical director suggested he look into the insurance industry. Archambault began his insurance industry career as a case manager at Standard Life in Montreal.

When Archambault’s wife, who works in banking, was offered a promotion, the couple relocated to Ontario, where he worked for Great West Life for another year.

At that point, he accepted a position as Clinical Resource / Senior Bilingual Care Manager with Organizational Health Inc. But that position was later abolished and the company sold out to Homewood Solutions, so Archambault joined La Capital Insurance Group as a Senior Disability Case Manager.

Archambault worked there for two years, while at the same time undertaking his CRTWC. He wrote the exam on May 27, 2014, interviewed for the Combined Insurance position in November, and started work on January 19, 2015.

“They were looking for someone with RTW knowledge, with disability knowledge, who has dealt with a unionized environment.”

Archambault said he acquired much of that expertise through the NIDMAR online training program, which he undertook in English.

“I worked on specific modules where I did not have the knowledge, such as working within a unionized environment, and duty to accommodate. Whenever we reviewed those parts in the modules, that’s what helped out when I wrote the exam. I had the DM knowledge, but I didn’t have RTW.”

Archambault had looked into the CDMP program, but determined that the CRTWC was more appropriate if he wanted to specialize in rehab. “A lot of companies, when you want to work as a Rehab consultant, or to do managerial work, require you to have the CRTWC, although some are starting to ask for the CDMP.”

Archambault adds that he was recently recruited to work as a part-time subcontractor with Clear Path Employer Services as a Medical consultant and a CSST disability consultant.

As a fully bilingual CRTWC, Archambault said he is well placed to work anywhere in Canada and he has already attracted the attention of recruiters, in part because he is able to work in French.

“My profile is on LinkedIn, and since I completed my CRTWC, at least once a week I’m being asked, ‘Would you be interested in coming to work at this type or that type of job?’ Mainly it’s in disability case management, because I’ve just started as a manager and I haven’t put it on LinkedIn yet. I’ve been there for four weeks and I haven’t had the chance.”



Kimberley LaFleche selected the CDMP program to expand her capabilities after promotion to a supervisory role. LaFleche is supervisor for Group Benefits at Wawanesa Insurance, and she can truthfully say this is where she first practiced disability management for humans.

“With my previous employer, part of the claims management I was doing was on pet health insurance claims. It was like disability for animals. I got to know a lot of the terminology associated with that, such as looking at pre-existing conditions, and a lot of the contract wording was very similar to how we work in DM.”

After three years in claims, LaFleche joined Wawanesa where, for the next five years, she handled claims for people.

LaFleche grew up in Winnipeg, and after graduating from high school, attended one year at the University of Winnipeg, followed by a year at the University of Manitoba. At that point, she transferred to Red River College, where she completed a two-year diploma program in Business Administration, with majors in Accounting and Marketing. After completing her diploma, LaFleche joined an insurance broker firm, where she spent ten years in Accounting before transferring over to Property and Casualty, where she was first exposed to the DM field.

“I was in the CGA (Certified General Accountant) program while I was still in Accounting. I completed the fourth year.” In those days, she explained, there was no formal certificate, and she had to make a critical decision. “I decided it was a lot of work, and I just couldn’t see myself starting a family, working full-time and doing a CGA.”

In 2009, after five years in Claims at Wawanesa, LaFleche was appointed to her current supervisory role. Her job is to direct the workflow within her department, and rather than pigeonhole employees into specific areas, Wawanesa promotes a strategy of exposing workers to the full spectrum of claims.

“We’re a small department and it’s most beneficial to have everybody trained on everything. It helps them in the long run, because knowledge is power. They can use it here or throughout their careers.”

LaFleche was not required to attain her CDMP, but decided it was a good fit. “I looked at the program and I felt it was well-suited to what we do and I liked the way that it was structured.”

LaFleche took the modules alongside two of her staff members. “It’s a daunting exam, but we felt prepared. The three of us had a tutor come in to prepare us.” All three candidates passed the exam. LaFleche said after undertaking the CDMP process together, she can now fully appreciate the capabilities of her certified colleagues.

“A lot of the information was not new to me, but what I liked was having the discussion forums where you could communicate with people around the world that are dealing with the same issues or have different issues or different rules that you had no idea about.”

LaFleche said she would recommend the CDMP program to other professionals, especially those who are new in the field. “I see how it’s benefited me and I see how it’s benefited the people in my department who took it, and both of them have been in this job for quite some time.”