



Professionals Add Designation to Other Credentials



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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 gold standard in disability management practice worldwide.

In this final of three Bulletins, Canada's Certified Disability Management Professionals (CDMPs) and Certified Return to Work Coordinators (CRTWCs) talk about their education and experience, and how earning a DM designation has enhanced their successful career paths.

CRTWC adds DM designation to a business degree

While earning a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the University of New Brunswick, Katrina Staples worked—under the university's co-op program—at two companies in Human Resources with an emphasis on safety, an area where her principal interests lie. After two and a half years as a full-time HR generalist, she ventured into a more specific field.

"I became a health and safety coordinator, thinking it touched on HR, was still people-oriented and involved helping people," she explained of her early career start. After that, she added an Occupational Health and Safety Certificate to her list of credentials.

Currently, she is a health and safety coordinator at McCain Foods (Canada) in Florenceville-Bristol, NB, where the company produces its dessert line and a popular pizza product. While McCain Foods also has a disability case manager who handles DM regionally, individual claims are often referred back to Staples for assessment, job analysis, and input into the return to work process. She also has a hands-on role working with WorkSafe New Brunswick on occupational claims, and communicates regularly with HR staff.

"I coordinate the day-to-day back to work modified duties," she adds, noting that she works as a resource to HR when it comes to disability management, an aspect of her coordinator job that she enjoys and is interested in. Under her own initiative, she pursued the CRTWC designation, seeing it as a perfect fit between her two worlds of health and safety, and DM. She took all the NIDMAR modules, beginning in 2009, and 14 months later successfully wrote the CRTWC exam.

She did much of the course work while off on maternity leave. And while achieving the designation was her own idea, she was mentored throughout the process by the regional safety manager at McCain Foods, who encouraged her after she had seen a posting for a DM case manager.

Realizing that she wasn't qualified, she began looking around for a DM designation before landing on NIDMAR's. Of the program, she says, "It sets you up nicely. I felt prepared by all the courses and didn't have to spend too much time studying for the test."

Now with the added professional credit of the CRTWC behind her name, Staples is more aware of the importance of sensitive issues such as confidentiality and is grateful that there is a "code of conduct to keep the confidentiality of each case."



CDMP enjoys “multi-factored” DM role at BC Children’s and Women’s Hospital

Arena Inderbir Sidhu graduated from Dalhousie University in Halifax, NS in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology. After that, she took on a challenging job as a rehabilitation assistant at Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre, a medical facility in northern Ontario that services a primarily First Nations population.

“It was the most valuable experience I’ve ever had,” she says of the job in the remote part of the province she calls “the hub of the North.” Because of its isolated location and difficulty finding help, the doctors and nurses there really looked to her for support. “I was needed, so you learn as you go.”

From there she moved across Canada to take on multiple contract positions until she found a job at LifeMark Health Centre, a rehabilitation provider, in Surrey, BC. She says she “stumbled” into disability management at her next job as a DM specialist at Banyan Work Health Solutions. There, it was her own idea to write the CDMP exam motivated by a desire to be certified; she was encouraged by her employer along the way.

She finds the DM field is never boring. “It’s so multi-factored. There are so many things you have to put into play in bringing a person back to work. It’s fascinating.”

Recently, she was hired by the BC Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) to work in case management at BC Children’s and Women’s Hospital. Although the CDMP designation is not a formal requirement of her job, she notes that many working at PHSA in disability management have their CDMPs. For her, she says, “I wouldn’t have looked at the job where I’m at now, if I wasn’t certified. It certainly helped me.”

Today, Sidhu works with multiple unions, navigates collective agreements, and ensures the legislative duty to accommodate, in assisting everyone from nurses to lab technicians with return to work. She thrives in the challenging hospital environment, “because it’s always so varied.”

Although she has no plans to leave Canada currently, she might be tempted if the CDMP designation was recognized in a remote, exotic location, some day in the future.

Foreign medical degree strengthens knowledge base of Montreal CDMP

Along with the CDMP designation he earned last year, the first designation behind Camil El Omari’s name is MDE, PCGI. Outside of Canada and the U.S., he’s a medical doctor, who earned his degree in Russia, and after graduation practiced at a family medical clinic in France. The French-speaking El Omari emigrated from Europe to Canada with his family in 2003.



He was quickly hired by Manulife Financial in Montreal as a disability specialist providing services to Canada Post, one of its clients.

In 2010, he was hired by Canada Post to work for the corporation as an occupational abilities coordinator. "I was doing a good enough job for them that they hired me," he notes, pleased with the move to an in-house position. Right away, he was given a chance to be certified through NIDMAR. "It's part of our score card, a way to evaluate us," he explains. "We're asked, 'Do you want to go further in the field?' I was given the chance and took it."

After completing a few of the modules, and studying disability strategy using the NIDMAR textbook, he passed the exam last year, but he hasn't stopped studying. He is earning the Continuing Education Credit (CEC) hours needed to maintain his standing as a CDMP by taking additional modules.

In the meantime, he still uses the textbook as a skill-freshening tool. "I have it in my drawer. If you have to go into detail, it builds your speech with facts."

In his work for Canada Post, he's found that certification has increased his confidence. He's able to build on intuition more and go further outside his comfort zone with the assurance that the certification is a mark that says, "You're a specialist."

He is pleased to work where the corporate philosophy ensures employees working in DM are experts in their field. He notes though, that more people at Canada Post in Montreal would be keen to write the exam if it were offered in French, a possibility that NIDMAR is exploring.

In the meantime, El Omari and his family are enjoying their lives in Canada and have no plans to move again. He is satisfied knowing that his knowledge and expertise in the DM field can be exported and shared internationally. "You feel you know something more if someone hasn't the same background and you're more specialized by being certified."