



Volume 7: Issue 1
January 2021

*A review of CSPDM
News and Events in
2020 and looking
ahead to all that we
can achieve together
this coming year.*

2020: CSPDM Year in Review

Members of the Canadian Society of Professionals in Disability Management are part of a growing community of dedicated professionals worldwide. CDMPs and CRTWCs work tirelessly to support individuals with mental/physical health challenges in being accommodated in the workplace, allowing them the chance to maintain financial independence, continue to realize their potential, contribute to society, and continue to access the same opportunities as their able bodied peers.

In 2020 our members faced unprecedented challenges when the COVID-19 pandemic forced businesses worldwide to adjust to new public health orders and re-imagine their daily operations. Disability Managers and Return to Work Specialists were navigating their own workplace disruptions, with access to their usual systems and supports suddenly impacted with the wholesale shift to working from home. CSPDM professionals have reported their heaviest workload to date with many seeing extraordinary surges in the number of cases they are managing.

At the same time, opportunities for disabled workers became even scarcer – employers who were already struggling with huge systematic change, were even less willing to accommodate those with differing abilities. And to further compound these hurdles, the isolation, fear and uncertainty caused by the ongoing pandemic began to take a toll on the mental wellness of citizens across all demographics. In December 2020, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) released data collected in partnership with UBC researchers through a nationwide monitoring survey on the mental health impacts of COVID-19. They found that 71% of Canadians were worried about the ongoing pandemic. Forty percent reported that their mental health has deteriorated since March, with the decline even more pronounced in those with a pre-existing mental health issue (61%) and those with a disability (50%).

Evolving physical distancing protocols and travel restrictions also created disruption for those hoping to write the CDMP and CRTWC exams in May 2020. The uncertainty of the pandemic caused the exam to be delayed until September 2020 and, due to the COVID-19 protocol status at that time, candidates were given the option to follow the current health and safety protocols and write their exams on the September date, or to defer their approved application to 2021. After moving forward with the exam with a smaller group of candidates, we were delighted to congratulate the new CDMPs and CRTWCs who were successful in achieving their designations. With the list of exam applicants who deferred their exam from last year, as well as those who have already registered for the 2021 exams, we anticipate seeing the number of exam writers increase this year, and expect to be close to 1,000 Canadian members by the end of the year.

There is also momentum building internationally with new countries adopting the CDMP and CRTWC designations each year. In March 2020, a graduation event, chaired by Dr. Mohammed Azman, CEO of the Malaysian Social Security Agency, was held in Kuala Lumpur. at which 80 participants were honoured who achieved the CDMP and CRTWC professional designations. Additionally, there were three individuals from local hospitals and, a very commendable first in that four members of Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial (BPJS) Ketenagakerjaan, Indonesia's Federal Social Security Organization, also wrote and passed the examinations.



Our international network of certified professionals now includes those located in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Indonesia, Malaysia, Namibia, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, and South Africa. There are now over 4,000 Certified Disability Management Professionals and Certified Return to Work Coordinators worldwide.

In addition, both the Governments of Belgium and Scotland conducted “value for money” audits in order to assess the improved operational socio-economic impact which individuals who had obtained the CDMP designation were having. This effort was undertaken in light of the significant expenditures associated with the professional Disability Management up skilling involving significant numbers of individuals which resulted in the extension of their respective license agreements to 2025, in addition to committing significant funds which will allow hundreds of individuals to be trained in order to obtain their CDMP designation.

In an already growing field, Disability Management professionals are needed more now than ever before. On December 3, 2020, International Day of People with Disabilities, John Mutch, CSPDM Chair and Executive Director of the WSIB Return-to-Work Division, reflected on the importance of this work; *“Having an effective disability management program ensures an inclusive work environment so that employees with disabilities can remain at work and contribute in a productive way. The CSPDM supports a strengthened, professional work force that promotes strong disability management practices...We recognize and appreciate the contributions that our members make each and every day to minimize the socioeconomic impact of disabling injuries and illnesses on employees and employers.”*

With many conferences and courses cancelled in 2020, we recognize the challenges with securing quality, online, continuing education opportunities to maintain one’s designation. The CSPDM is focused on identifying new digital events, learning opportunities, webinars, research and resources for support.

As part of this effort, a number of CSPDM members played a key role in organizing, participating and supporting the IFDM virtual global conference on November 9, 2020 which was chaired by François Perl, the Director General of the Belgian Social Security Agency, and with the postponement of IFDM 2020 to 2021, it was designed to specifically focus on DM in the COVID-19 world.

There is new content being added on an ongoing basis to the CSPDM website. If you are looking to review some new education options, please visit the “Conferences, Courses and More” and “Research and Publications” pages in the Members Only section of the site. NOTE: Watch for a survey later this month, where we will be asking for your input and direction on the CE opportunities that you are seeking and how we can best support members in these changing times.

As noted by the Honourable Wayne Wouters, PC, OC, Chancellor of the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences, *“The opportunity to find or return to employment is absolutely essential for any individual’s dignity, financial independence, fulfillment and self worth – the impacts of Disability Management and Return to Work professionals cannot be overstated, it is truly life changing work!”*

To both our newest members, and those trailblazers who were among the first to achieve their designations, we wish you a happy, healthy and safe 2021. Thank you for your continued partnership in 2020 and we look forward to all that we can achieve together this coming year!