Honoring the Past, Moving Toward a Future of Possibility

By Maria Henderson MS, CRC, CDMS, CCM
Chair, CDMS Commission

This year, the CDMS Commission marks its 25th anniversary. Reaching this milestone calls for a moment of reflection to consider how far we have come and our hopes for the future. We are in the midst of an exciting journey.

In its early days, our field was rooted in insurance-based rehabilitation, which was practiced mostly by nurses and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Since then so much has changed. Today, a Certified Disability Management Specialist provides services to help people with illnesses, injuries, and/or disabilities to return to work or stay at work, while furthering the health and productivity goals of employers. This focus makes us unique among other practitioners, managing both the human side and the business case.

INCREASED DEMAND AHEAD

Looking ahead, we believe that trends such as the aging workforce and greater emphasis on wellness and prevention will make the knowledge, skills, and expertise of Certified Disability Management Specialists even more valuable in the future. How and where we practice will continue to be influenced by employer demands. As you will read in Cherie King’s article, the latest Role & Function study has identified a fourth domain, or area of practice, related to employer-based disability management. [See article on page 3.] More than ever, disability management reflects a blending of the clinical aspects of case management with business practice.

Those of us who have been practicing for many years have personally witnessed these changes. With a background in vocational rehabilitation, I went into disability management in 1986, working in a hospital rehabilitation setting. Two years later, I became a rehabilitation case manager. The field was reactive in those days; trying to convince employers to take people back—largely in response to (or to avoid) litigation. After ten years, I went into the employer arena, working in both risk management and human resources departments. For the past five years, I have been a consultant working with employers on developing programs to improve the health, wellness, and productivity of their workforces.

As we have seen in more recent years, employers are embracing our field of practice. They are turning increasingly to disability managers to design and implement programs that are preventative and proactive. Through these initiatives, we are able to positively impact thousands of employees in the workplace based on their ability—not their disability.

Today, we are seeing another new and exciting trend in the field: a wider mix of professionals with more diverse backgrounds—including human resources, safety, risk management, and other related disciplines—who are practicing disability management. In light of these changes, the Commission has taken steps to usher the CDMS credential into a bright future of potential growth and possibility.

As we communicated earlier this year, the Commission has revised eligibility criteria for those wishing to sit for the CDMS Source
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CDMS certification exam, recognizing the increased professional diversity in the field. The new criteria acknowledge the strong emphasis that continues to be placed on employment experience to develop the necessary expertise in employer-based disability management. Unlike other disciplines, expertise in disability management cannot be obtained through a college degree. Rather, it can only be developed experientially. (Read more about the revised criteria on our web site.)

The CDMS Commission believes that embracing those who come to the field from a wider variety of disciplines will further elevate the certification by recognizing the multidisciplinary nature of the practice. The previous eligibility criteria had been an impediment for these practitioners to sit for the exam. As a result of the new criteria, in February 2010, more applicants will sit for the certification examination than the Commission has seen over an entire year in the recent past.

The purpose of certification is, first and foremost, to protect the consumer. By extending eligibility to more practitioners, we are able to bring them under the umbrella of certification, which requires that they stay current through continuing education and adhere to a strict Code of Professional Practice.

Now, we need to ensure that practitioners who wish to become certified have access to the education and resources they need. Our latest project is developing a body of knowledge for the practice of disability management. In the future, we hope to partner with human resources, safety, and benefits organizations to deploy this knowledge to help individuals gain access to information that will allow them to gain expertise and work toward certification.

As the field of disability management continues to grow and expand, we look forward to many new opportunities that will enable us, as we say in our new logo tagline, to promote competency, collaboration, and assurance.

CDMS Commission Unveils New Brand and Logo

Disability management is a continuum: from absence to return-to-work, from disability to ability. The continuum also extends across the history of our practice: from our roots in insurance rehabilitation to disability management, integrated disability management, absence management, and the emphasis today on health, wellness, and productivity. In order to achieve workplace goals and meet the increasing demands of employers, disability management brings together a variety of distinct, yet complementary disciplines.

To reflect this picture of disability management today, the CDMS Commission has adopted a new brand. Like the practice itself, the brand is a continuum. And like the separate disciplines brought together under the umbrella of disability management, each letter in the CDMS Commission logo is set against a background of contemporary and complementary colors, starting with our anchor brand red. The result is a colorful spectrum, reflecting the span of knowledge areas, skills, and expertise that encompass the practice.

The images in the logo are completed by our new tagline: Competency. Collaboration. Assurance. These three words signify the purpose, promise, and value of CDMS certification. This is the essence of what we offer. As certificants, we aspire to the highest standards in the practice. To the individuals who receive disability management services, we stand for quality and expertise. To the employers who look to us for proactive workforce programs, we offer in-depth knowledge, best practices, and cost-effective solutions. And to the other professionals with whom we work, we extend collaboration to achieve excellence.

EXCITING NEW VENTURES AHEAD

You too can be an important participant in this journey. The CDMS Commission welcomes your feedback on our new look and brand story. Likewise, we invite you to share your own stories from years of experience in the practice of disability and absence management. Contact us at info@CDMS.org with your ideas and thoughts.

Announcing NEW LinkedIn Group

The official LinkedIn group for the CDMS Commission is now open to professionals working in disability and absence management, work interruption, safety and risk management, vocational rehab, case management, and human resources. As we build this online community, the group will become an invaluable resource for us to:

- Share information and expertise
- Stay connected with colleagues
- Meet and support new certificants
- Reach out to prospective certificants
- Expand professional opportunities
- And more

To contribute, follow these simple steps:
1. Go to www.LinkedIn.com, Join, or sign in as an existing member.
2. Search “groups” for the CDMS Commission.
3. Submit your application for membership.
4. Upon acceptance, you can ask questions, start discussions, and post comments.
Role & Function Study Reveals Fourth Domain

By Cherie L. King Sc. D., CDMS, CRC
Chair, Research and Examination Committee

How does the practice of disability management continue to evolve? To address this question, the Commission turned to its Role & Function Study: scientific field research that is conducted every five years to determine the current knowledge and skills required of disability managers.

The results of the newly completed Role & Function Study show that disability managers continue to expand their roles, particularly to meet the increasing demands of employers. In particular, the study revealed a fourth area of practice, or “domain,” in disability management: Employment Leaves and Benefits Administration. In addition, three previously identified domains were further defined.

In order to establish and confirm the fourth domain, disability managers did report that they engaged in tasks related to employment leaves and benefits with some regularity. However, these activities were not viewed as being as “critical” as other disability management functions (e.g. disability and work interruption case management) in terms of protecting consumers of disability management services. What is interesting to note is practitioners surveyed in the latest Role & Function study reflect the same mix of professionals who have traditionally practiced disability management: rehabilitation counselors, nurse case managers, and disability management consultants.

Now that the results of the Role & Function Study are in, and the final report has been approved by the Commission, the process will begin to incorporate the findings of current practice.

The four domains of disability management,
as identified by experts in the field and verified by practicing disability managers who were surveyed, are:

Disability and Work Interruption Case Management, including gathering relevant case information, synthesizing information, interpreting case-specific local, state, and federal regulations, and developing a case management plan

Workplace Intervention for Disability Prevention, including conducting organizational assessments, evaluating policies and procedures, presenting the business rationale for disability management programs, managing human resources, applying labor relation laws, and managing financial resources

Program Development, Management, and Evaluation, including organizing and planning disability management programs, applying qualitative and quantitative measurements, interpreting financial/risk data, designing programs with rewards and incentives, and tracking cost, operational, and outcomes data

Employment Leaves and Benefits Administration, including managing health-related employment leaves, administering health and welfare plans, managing payroll and systems data, as well as identifying risks associated with interruptions and leaves.

into our Certified Disability Management Specialist (CDMS) certification examination. Updating the certification examination is a major reason why the Role & Function study is completed: to ensure that exam content is relevant and reflective of current practice.

UPDATE TEST CONTENT
The Commission will convene an item-writing workshop in February 2010, bringing together subject-matter experts to help develop new test questions or “items” as they are called. The Examination & Research Committee also continues to purge old and outdated questions from the item bank, from which the exam content is drawn.

There is an established process of item testing before new content appears on the exam. After the items are written and reviewed by the Examination & Research Committee, they are pre-tested without scoring to ensure that they are psychometrically sound. Those taking the certification examination will not know which items are being tested and which will affect their score. With this well-established process, it may take more than a year for an item to become operational.

PUBLISH RESULTS
Detailed results from the Role & Function Study will be published in the coming months in peer-reviewed journals and other publications. However, the Examination & Research Committee was eager to share initial results with Certified Disability Management Specialists in this year’s Newsletter.

The CDMS Commission and the Examination & Research Committee take pride in the Role & Function Study. We wish to thank the subject matter experts and survey respondents who took part in the survey, and the item-writers who volunteer their time to help ensure that CDMS examination is backed by the latest scientifically conducted research.

Earn CE Credits in 2010
Answer questions on the 2009 revision of the CDMS Code of Professional Conduct and earn 2 ethics CEs. Look for a posting on the CDMS web site after January 1, 2010.
ADA Amendments: An Opportunity to Help Employers Examine and Implement Workforce Solutions

In January 2009, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments of 2008 went into effect. The intention of the Amendments is to restore eligibility in keeping with the original language of the law. Thus, the impact of court decisions that had considerably narrowed the scope of the ADA over the years has been reversed.

Under the ADA Amendments, a broader range of people are considered to have disabilities and therefore are entitled to reasonable accommodations. This presents an opportunity for employers to examine their workforce management policies—and for Certified Disability Management Specialists to showcase their expertise as employers address the needs of individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

To further understanding and discussion about the ADA Amendments and their impact on the workplace, the CDMS Commission has published a white paper, “The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments: Taking a Workforce Management Approach,” which can be found on the Commission web site (see www.CDMS.org). This is the first of many such resources and tools that the Commission plans to offer to certificants, other allied professionals, and employers on its web site. We encourage you to read the white paper and share it with anyone you think will benefit from this discussion.

The white paper provides an overview of the ADA Amendments and the broadening of the definition of disability under the law. The document also explores the need for a workforce management response to the Amendments, with policies and procedures that will likely pay off in the long run in terms of improving morale, productivity, and employee retention.

The ADA Amendments also offer opportunities for Certified Disability Management Specialists to help employers comply with the law. Given their expertise in assessment, accommodation, return-to-work (RTW), and health, wellness, and productivity initiatives, Certified Disability Managers who work with and for employers will become even more valuable members of the workforce management team. Disability managers will be called upon to help employers provide employment opportunities for individuals based on their abilities, regardless of the existence of physical, mental, or cognitive disabilities or other limitations.

A key understanding of the ADA Amendments is the necessary change in attitude particularly among those employers who in the past responded with attempts to disqualify individuals from coverage under the ADA. This defensive response was often successful because court decisions had narrowed eligibility. Now, however, the ADA Amendments have reinstated the original intent and scope of the law. Thus, employers will find it far more beneficial to engage in dialogue with employees, rather than to pursue a legal case against eligibility.

The employer response under the ADA Amendments must focus on procedure, starting with what needs to be done as soon as an employee provides notification that he/she has a disability. The protocol must be clearly stated for all parties, including front-line supervisors and human resources personnel. Established policies and procedures enable employers to be consistent in their approach to disability, demonstrating that they treat everyone the same way because they have specific steps in place when people report a disability and request accommodation.

Certified Disability Management Specialists will be called upon to exhibit leadership as they help companies examine and redefine the ways that they are doing business in compliance with the ADA Amendments. These activities speak directly to key components of disability management, including: job analyses to determine the

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2009 Quality Leadership Award
Presented to Baptist Health South Florida

Each year, the CDMS Commission selects a company or organization that embraces best practices in integrated disability management. This year, the Quality Leadership Award was presented to Baptist Health South Florida, recognizing its excellence in workplace programs including return-to-work (RTW), intervention, and wellness. Baptist Health South Florida is a not-for-profit hospital and healthcare organization based in Coral Gables, FL. The organization includes six hospitals and numerous outpatient centers in a three-county area, and has more than 13,000 employees.

Baptist Health’s integrated disability management program brings together internal and external partners to manage short-term and long-term disability, workers’ compensation, leave of absence, and RTW. The organization also has a return-to-work recognition program that spotlights leaders who champion RTW and retention efforts, as well as the employees who participate—creating a positive culture.

“It is with great pride that we receive this year’s Quality Leadership Award. Our dedication in developing and implementing creative ‘integrated’ approaches to managing disabilities and absences and providing proactive employee retention efforts has led to significant positive results for our organization in a relatively short period of time,” said Lisa Miranda-Sixto, manager of Integrated Disability Management for Baptist Health South Florida. “Our successes would not be possible without our strong leadership support, collaboration of a qualified team of internal and external experts, early return-to-work efforts and aggressive case management services. Our goal is to continue to promote our commitment to retaining a healthy, safe and productive workforce by evaluating the effectiveness of our programs, implementing process improvements, and providing value-added, innovative and cost-effective services that make a positive impact and difference in the lives of our workforce.”

HONORABLE MENTION
Presented to Eugene Water & Electric Board

The CDMS Commission also recognized the Eugene (Ore.) Water & Electric Board, one of the oldest publicly owned utilities in the Northwest, with a special Honorable Mention. With just over 500 employees it offers a broad disability management program that covers workers’ compensation, short-term and long-term disability, workers’ compensation, leave of absence, and RTW. The organization also has a return-to-work recognition program that spotlights leaders who champion RTW and retention efforts, as well as the employees who participate—creating a positive culture.

“We have worked very hard over the last five-plus years to put a much stronger focus on our employee wellness. I am very proud of our safety and health team for providing the underpinning of our success. I am also proud of our employees who have also stepped up to the challenge of making every day at work safe and productive,” commented Randy Berggren, general manager of Eugene Water & Electric. “Their combined efforts have reduced our time lost and our workers’ compensation costs while enhancing the long-term health of our employees. This proactive attitude and continuous commitment to innovation exemplifies our vision to be the best publicly-owned utility in the nation.”
New Technology Tools for Certification, Renewal and CE Submission

Responding to the needs of applicants and certificants, the CDMS Commission is launching a new suite of technology tools to improve and streamline the certification and renewal process. Starting in early 2010, a new online system will allow:

- Submission of applications both for certification and certification renewal
- Submission of continuing education (CE) program pre-approval and CE hours, as well as certificant-based CE tracking
- Full payment online

The online tools will be highly appealing to those seeking CDMS certification. The technology is complementary to our computer-based testing for those wishing to achieve the CDMS credential.

Existing certificants who must renew their CDMS credential every five years will also benefit from the new technology tools. Certificants will be able to track and view their certification status online at any time, including the number of CE hours submitted. Continuing education information, including attachments, may be entered by the certificant at any time during the certification cycle. Certificants will receive electronic reminders as their renewal date approaches.

The CDMS Commission is committed to offering online tools to improve the experience of applicants and certificants. Stay tuned for more developments as the Commission broadens its reach through online communities and blogs, to foster dialogue and increase awareness of disability management.

Meet Chris Moranda, New CDMS Commissioner

With a passion for employing people with disabilities, Chris Moranda has been a Certified Disability Management Specialist for 17 years. Chris’ career evolved as she built a knowledge base in disability management and return-to-work (RTW). Today, she is the Director of Disability Programs at OhioHealth, a nationally recognized, not-for-profit healthcare organization based in Columbus, Ohio. “I got to the place where I had this wealth of knowledge and experience. I knew about the medical aspects of disability. I knew about RTW because of my focus in the workers’ compensation arena,” Moranda reflected. “That led me to the CDMS. I felt that I needed this credential for credibility.”

With a background as a dance movement therapist, Moranda worked with people with developmental disabilities in the early 1980s, and later became a vocational evaluator and work adjustment counselor. Here, she found her passion: helping people find acceptance in the workplace based on their abilities—not their disabilities. Next she became a workers’ compensation case manager and then director of case management operations. Later, she began working with Medicaid consumers.

Five years ago, Moranda moved to her “dream job” at OhioHealth, where she oversees disability programs. One of her proudest accomplishments was obtaining senior leadership support to help OhioHealth associates who become ill or injured and are unable to return to their regular jobs to find new positions within the hospital system. In 2008, OhioHealth won the Best Practices Award from the Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities. This year, Moranda is the chair of the Council.

Moranda, who is a Commissioner of the CDMS Commission, believes that the CDMS certification uniquely reflects her knowledge and expertise. Now, she looks for that credential among the job candidates she interviews. “When a person has the CDMS, I know he/she has gone through the certification process to establish knowledge and expertise,” she added.
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2009 – 2010

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Building the CDMS Community
As reflected in our new brand, the CDMS Commission is committed to reaching out to those who come to
the practice of disability and absence management from a wide variety of disciplines.

Earlier this year, we revised our eligibility criteria so that more practitioners could sit for the certification
exam. Our next step is to provide access to the education and resources needed by potential
certificants in their exam preparation. Now, we’re starting to build a learning and practice community
that directly benefits certificants—and indirectly
benefits the individuals who receive disability management services and their employers.

TELL US MORE
As the CDMS Commission begins to rethink how
we reach and serve current and potential certificants,
your input is really important. We are interested in
your experiences in the practice of disability
and absence management. We want to know your
preferences for information and knowledge sharing.
Please tell us about your needs. What practice topics
are you interested in? How do you stay current?
How do you stay connected?

HERE’S WHAT TO DO
A brief survey with questions about your practice
focus and professional activities is now posted on the
CDMS web site. We would really appreciate you setting
aside 10-15 minutes to fill it out.

Want to participate?

Please follow these simple steps:
1. Log in at www.CDMS.org
2. To access the survey, click Contact Us
   and select Building the CDMS
   Community Survey.
3. Complete the survey with as much detail
   as possible.
4. Submit your completed survey.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT
With your feedback, we can build a strong and
vibrant CDMS community. We’ll keep you informed
about our progress and look to you for ongoing
thoughts and ideas.

Thank you in advance for your time and
important participation.

Like what you’re reading?

Share it with others!
The CDMS Commission invites you to forward
this issue of CDMSource to anyone who is
interested in disability management.