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One-on-one with... Sandra Stimson

March 6, 2014 by Lois A. Bowers, Senior Editor



New federal and [state standards](#) are being instituted as governing bodies begin to recognize the importance of special training in the area of dementia. In this environment, Sandra Stimson, CADDCT, CALA, ADC, AC-BC, CDP, CDCM, executive director of the [National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners \(NCCDP\)](#) and the [International Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners \(ICCDP\)](#), recently took time to answer some questions about the organizations and their programs.

How long have your organizations been in operation?

The NCCDP was formed in 2003 by a group of healthcare professionals who were concerned about the lack of dementia education or lack of consistency in dementia education provided to front-line staff and healthcare professionals. The regulations regarding dementia units are different in every state, and they may or may not address dementia education.

Most training institutions, such as technical colleges and universities, do not provide dementia education as part of their health profession curricula. First responders also receive little training in the area of Alzheimer's disease and dementia care and so are ill-equipped to deal with the older population when responding to emergency calls in private homes or to traffic situations involving members of the older population who have diagnoses of dementia.

So the NCCDP saw the need not only for standardization of the dementia education but also the need for dementia certification, which requires ongoing education to maintain. Then the ICCDP was established in 2012 to support healthcare professionals and front-line staff in other countries. Both divisions have the same mission, which is comprehensive Alzheimer's disease and dementia education and certification.

Who are your education and certification programs designed for?

The NCCDP and ICCDP exist for the sole purpose of supporting all healthcare professionals, front-line staff and first responders working in all aspects of the healthcare industry, community, associations and government agencies. Other excellent organizations, such as the Alzheimer's Association or Alzheimer's Foundation of America, offer support and education for family caregivers as well as healthcare professionals.

Education has an impact on the care provided. We offer online learning on our site that is approved by 60 governing bodies. In addition, we have partnered with media that offer articles directly designed for our membership.

The NCCDP/ICCDP also offers free, downloadable staff in-service materials for trainers, professors and in-service directors in honor of our Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Staff Education Week, Feb. 14 to

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21. The PowerPoint slides, handouts and pre-tests can be downloaded Nov. 1 to March 15.

And we offer several proprietary certification designations: Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP), Certified Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Trainer (CADDCT), Certified Dementia Care Manager (CDCM), Certified First Responder Dementia Trainer (CFRDT) and Certified First Responder–Dementia Trained (CFR–DT).

- CDP: CDP certification is for those who complete our Alzheimer's disease and dementia care seminar—a one-day, live class—and who qualify for CDP. Each student receives a large notebook with handouts.
- CADDCT: NCCDP/ICCDP recognized that no formal training existed for educators who were providing dementia in-services or dementia education. In 2003, we began offering a “train the trainer” class and soon followed with CADDCT certification. CADDCT certification is open to educators in learning institutions, in-service directors and corporate trainers. It requires completion of a one-day, 12-hour live class that is held nationwide every week and is taught by NCCDP/ICCDP corporate staff. The application process is lengthy. All trainers receive extensive training materials.
- CDCM: Another area we felt had to be addressed was the lack of training and certification for dementia unit managers. In 2005, we worked with Golden Living and now have a CDCM certification program and class that provide comprehensive information about Alzheimer's disease and dementia unit policy and procedures. This certification is available for dementia unit managers who have oversight of an Alzheimer's disease and dementia care unit in an assisted living facility or nursing home. The CDCM training is a three-hour conference call following the Train the Trainer CADDCT class.
- CFRDT certification is only offered to CADDCT or first responder trainers who provide education to first responders. It is a one-day, live class.
- CFR-DT certification is for first responders who have completed dementia education by a CFRDT.

All certifications must be renewed every two years. This process requires completing 10 CEs or 10 CEUs in any healthcare-related topic. NCCDP/ICCDP also awards credit for participation in the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) MLN Connects](#) educational conference calls.

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Genius runs in the family.



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Many associations offer our Alzheimer's disease and dementia care seminar at their state or national conferences. For example, the [National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration in Long Term Care \(NADONA\)](#) will host it for the third straight year at its national conference, and it will be presented by the NADONA president, who is a CADDCT. This year, NADONA also will host the CADDCT Train the Trainer class, which was a huge success last year. Many of the state healthcare associations, such as Nebraska's, have had this seminar and others many times.

All of the seminars held across the country are listed on the NCCDP/ICCDP website, and the calendar is updated daily.

How much do your programs cost?

The CDP application is \$100. Members of associations hosting our Alzheimer's disease and dementia care seminar are offered a discount of \$25 for the CDP application versus the customary \$100 fee.

Typically, the Alzheimer's disease and dementia care one-day seminar costs \$185 per person. Each trainer decides the price, however. The trainers are independent of the NCCDP/ICCDP.

Associations or corporations that wish to hire either the NCCDP/ICCDP corporate staff or a CADDCT will work with the trainer on a price. Associations and corporations that hire a CADDCT or send someone in-house to become a CADDCT are offered a corporate discount rate for CDP certification. Applications are \$100 per person, but if the company is paying for the applications, the cost is \$25 per person.

Why is training and education important for professional caregivers, owners/operators and others in the long-term care industry?

Aging affects all of us, so we all have to be concerned about every aspect of the healthcare industry, including education. We are in the middle of what many refer to as the "senior tsunami," and it is expected to last for the next 60 years. The number one diagnosis among the older population is dementia. Some associations have stated that 60 percent of those admitted to facilities have dementia. We think it is much higher than that. But as the number of dementia cases continues to increase nationally and worldwide, there is a great necessity to ensure that caregivers, front-line staff and healthcare professionals are well-trained to provide appropriate, competent and sensitive direct care and support for the dementia patient.

With the passing of [National Alzheimer's Project Act \(NAPA\)](#) and, of course, [CMS Hand in Hand](#) training, it is now out of the owners' hands, and they no longer can afford to put off training. Once it goes into effect, NAPA will have strict requirements about dementia education.

Why should companies or individuals consider paying for training and certification programs—yours or others? What are the benefits?

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Visit any career site and view the long-term care employment ads. Corporations have now made CDP certification part of the job description. Many times, new hires are given a certain amount of time to receive CDP, CDCM or CADDCT certification, so not having it may mean a lost job opportunity or promotion. Many corporations now see the importance of comprehensive dementia education and CDP certification and pay for staff dementia education and CDP certification.

Many learning institutions, such as Penn State, are now adding the NCCDP/ICCDP curriculum to their programs. Healthcare students must have comprehensive dementia education before entering the workforce. That only makes sense.

Do you think specific education or certification completion gives caregivers, facilities and others a marketing or other business advantage?

Customers today are very smart, savvy and educated, not only about long-term care options but also about Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Because of the Internet, they are aware of dementia education programs and dementia certifications. They are now asking during their tours what type of dementia education is provided to the staff and how many of the staff members are CDP-certified. Daily, we receive calls from families requesting a list of facilities, hospice agencies and home care agencies that have CDPs on staff. There's absolutely a competitive edge.

What's the most important point you hope people take away from their experience with your organization?

We hope that the students leave our seminars rejuvenated and reminded of why they chose the healthcare industry.

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