

Coming to a branch meeting near you

In this, the final CPD article of the year, **Lin-Nam Wang** reveals why pharmacists should look out for a continuing professional development facilitator at their local branch meetings



Branch members and preregistration trainees at West Metropolitan branch play “Call my Bluff”, based on words key to the CPD process, such as “review”, “support” and “time”

The benefits of attending a branch meeting include learning new things, revisiting a topic with an expert, networking and catching up with old friends. However, many of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s branches are now taking the initiative to help their members get to grips with continuing professional development and pharmacists can take advantage of this.

For example, two weeks ago, on a cold night in Hammersmith, over 40 pharmacists and preregistration trainees at the West Metropolitan branch stayed on past nine o’clock, after a meeting about over-the-counter simvastatin, to take part in the branch’s first half-hour CPD session provided by the Society. The session was based on the CPD toolkit for branches, showcased at the branch and regional secretaries’ meeting in October. It was run by Krishna Patel, one of the Society’s 21 part-time CPD facilitators.

The idea of providing a CPD toolkit for branches and recruiting facilitators to use it came from the branches themselves, Beverley Parkin, director of public affairs and communications at the Society, told *The Journal*. In 2001, the Society held a consultative review of the branches, asking questions such as how the profession could best be supported. “One strong message was that members wanted branches to have a role in CPD and another strong message was they wanted some local facilitation,” Ms Parkin said. The results of the review were taken to Council and an imple-

mentation programme was agreed. As a result, a team at the Society spent the first half of this year producing the toolkit and recruiting and training the facilitators who have been available to the branches since September.

CPD facilitators

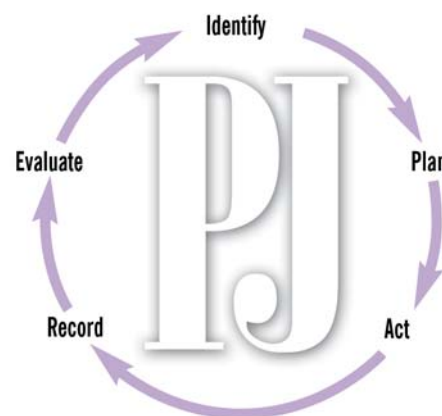
The 21 CPD facilitators are pharmacists from a wide range of backgrounds and most work, full-time, in other jobs. The group includes tutors from the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education and pharmacists from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Mrs Patel is a medicines directorate pharmacist at Hammersmith Hospital NHS Trust.

Sue Jones, one of the Society’s two lead facilitators, said that the aim of the facilitators is to support pharmacists who have concerns about CPD by demystifying the CPD process. “Some pharmacists are quite scared about what will happen when CPD becomes mandatory,” she said. Ms Jones also works as clinical pharmacy practice lecturer at King’s College, London.

Sessions available

The toolkit contains a range of materials to support a range of CPD aspects, including:

- Around the CPD cycle
- Support for CPD
- Understanding reflection
- Understanding learning needs
- Reviewing CPD records
- Benefits and barriers of CPD
- RPSGB requirements for CPD
- Recording CPD the RPSGB way



Identify knowledge gaps

1. What CPD support is available to members?
2. How are branches adopting a CPD approach to their meetings?
3. What are the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s requirements for CPD?

Before reading on, think about how this article may help you to do your job better. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s areas of competence for pharmacists are listed in “Plan and record”, (available at: www.rpsgb.org/education). This article relates to CPD in general.

The aim is to support CPD in an entertaining and informative way so toolkit-based sessions can be run in the style of a pub quiz (teams), a group discussion or chat show, a television quiz show or case studies. These different activities were all tried and tested

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Panel: Sources of CPD support for pharmacists

- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's CPD website, office and technical helpline and library
- The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education, the Scottish Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education and the Welsh Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education
- Employers
- Primary care trusts, local health groups and community health partnerships
- Local pharmaceutical committees
- NHS pharmacy training and education teams
- The National Prescribing Centre
- Internet sites
- The branch network
- Local CPD supporters (pharmacists who have been trained to provide a supporting role by the Society)
- Local support groups
- Colleagues
- Managers
- Specialist organisations (eg, UK clinical pharmacy association)

on pharmacists when the toolkit was developed.

Importantly, the activities suggested are flexible, covering the different aspects at "introductory or refresher" and intermediate levels. This is to provide for the wide variation in the level of knowledge of and confidence in CPD between branches. Each activity needs a minimum of 30 minutes and has been designed to provide a light-hearted start or a relaxed end to a branch meeting. Activities can also be combined to make up a full branch meeting. "Jerry Springer-type sessions make it easier to talk about CPD — they take the pressure and stress away from the subject and allow lively debate and discussion" Ms Jones said.

The branch network

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's local branches provide an opportunity for members to get closer to the workings of the Society and to meet with other pharmacists and share experiences. With more than 130 branches nationwide, all those registered with the Society have the opportunity to belong to a branch that is either near to their home or near to their place of work. If the branch to which they are allocated is not the most convenient, members can opt to transfer to another branch.

To find out more about the network or to transfer to a branch more convenient for you, please contact the Society's membership unit (tel 020 7572 2331; e-mail b&ra@rpsgb.org).

Details about branch meetings are published in *The Journal's* Diary column and on pjonline. Information about the branches is published twice a year in *Network News*, which is distributed as a centre pull-out in *The Journal*.



Matthew Boyd, Nottingham branch

Nottingham branch members practise making online CPD records

Each branch will be able to run two facilitated meetings a year. The facilitators have each been allocated four to six branches and have been given the onus of contacting their branches to talk about running the CPD programme, the CPD needs of individual branches and tailoring the sessions to them.

Feedback

Comments from pharmacists who took part in the "Call my Bluff" in Hammersmith included that the session was "different". One participant liked the "unusual way in which the session was conducted" but felt that there was room for more detail to have been included. Another problem was that shy people avoided taking part in the activity, he said.

Gavin Miller, West Metropolitan branch secretary, said that tagging on the session to the end of a meeting worked well. He thought that people enjoyed the interactive element, which kept their attention. "We will definitely take advantage of the two facilitated sessions per year and have already booked another session in January, this time about recording CPD," he said.

Special grants for CPD

Some branches have gone one step further. For example, in May, Nottingham branch successfully bid for extra funds from the Society so that at least two CPD workshops in which participants have access to PCs could be run. The aim was to let pharmacists try recording their CPD online. "We were absolutely deluged with requests [for places]. I have never known of a response like this," Steve Garner, Nottingham branch secretary, told *The Journal*. "We obviously touched a nerve," he added.

The first of the workshops was held in November, in a Nottingham School of Pharmacy dispensing laboratory, which houses 52 PCs. The branch's CPD facilitator was on hand to answer questions from pharmacists

and talk about their CPD concerns. The second workshop is to be held in February.

Conclusion

When CPD becomes mandatory in 2005, attending a branch meeting could form part of your CPD portfolio. Applying the CPD cycle means asking yourself if the content of a meeting is relevant to your practice. If the topic is not relevant, of course, you can still go ahead and enjoy the meeting, but it may not be so suitable as a CPD record. And if you cannot remember when you last went to a branch meeting, why not make it a new year's resolution to give it another try?

The remit of the branch CPD facilitators is only to provide the branches with toolkit activities. They cannot deal with individual queries outside branch meetings. However, there are many other sources of support for CPD and these are listed in the Panel.

Action: practice points

Reading is only one way to undertake CPD and the Society will expect to see various approaches in a pharmacist's CPD portfolio.

1. If you could not answer question 3 in the Identify panel, look for a CPD session at your local branch and put it in your diary.
2. If you have not already done so, read 'Plan and record', then go to a branch meeting and talk to your peers about their CPD.
3. Visit the CPD website: www.uptodate.org.uk

Evaluate

For your work to be presented as CPD, you need to evaluate your reading and any other activities. Answer the following questions: What have you learnt? How has it added value to your practice? (Have you applied this learning or had any feedback?) What will you do now and how will this be achieved?