

CPD diary: community pharmacist changing behaviour

Alf Choudhury is a consultant pharmacist at Boots The Chemists in East Anglia. He is married and has two sons, aged four and seven years. In his spare time, Mr Choudhury enjoys going to the gym.

My example of continuing professional development spans many actions over several months. I think it highlights how broad CPD can be. When I worked at the busy Lowestoft branch, I really lacked confidence. For example, I took too much time over checking prescriptions because I was nervous about making mistakes and this caused a few complaints. My poor stress-coping strategies made me irritable. I was also unhappy with my physical fitness. I knew I had a problem but I did not know how to solve it and I felt embarrassed.

Reading various articles, for example, "What makes pharmacists competent" (*PJ*, 27 November 2004, pp779–80) and "Ways to help change behaviour" (*PJ*, 13 December 2003, pp813–5) helped me to understand the psychology of making changes and the public health role I could play. After several discussions with managers, I was offered a six-month secondment to a store where I could work with an experienced pharmacist who had time to support me. Spending time in a less stressful environment let me improve my knowledge of basic operational procedures. It also permitted weekly reviews to analyse any difficulties encountered. At the same time, I started aerobics classes three times a week in order to combat my increased weight and blood pressure. Through all these exercises my confidence and personal effectiveness grew.

Not every action was planned but, with the help of my colleagues, it all came together. And it is good to see the evidence. Now I work as a relief pharmacist and am sometimes at the Lowestoft store. I have had positive comments from the staff



about how much more approachable I am and how I am a better person to work with. Although I cannot say that exercise has directly made me a better pharmacist, I certainly feel the benefits and this is reflected in how I work. If I felt unconfident, how could patients be confident in me? Ultimately, it is about improving the quality of the service you provide. I am now also in a good position to advise others on aspects of behavioural change.

CPD is not just about gaining knowledge. It can be about behavioural change. Different people have different weaknesses. Taking the time to focus on mine has made me feel better about myself and a better pharmacist.

I record my CPD using the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's website. I find it easy to work through the questions but it helps to make a plan on paper first.