

LIFE-LONG LEARNING IN TECHNICAL SERVICES

Continuing professional development was the focus of a meeting held recently by the NHS Pharmaceutical Technical Services Education and Training Group and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Hospital Pharmacists Group. Olumide Cole reports

The aim of the NHS Pharmaceutical Technical Services Education and Training (TSET) Group is to act as a focus for the identification and sourcing of training and education for pharmaceutical technical specialist hospital staff in the UK which is appropriate to the needs of the individual and the service. The chairman of the group, PAUL MALTBY, stressed that NHS TSET does not deliver courses but rather identifies a suitable organisation for this purpose.

The patterns of health care delivery are changing, due to advances in technology, more informed consumers and increased expectations, among other things. Continuing professional development (CPD) is important because it maintains competence, helps to satisfy patient expectations, and improves recruitment and retention of staff. JEANETTE HOWE, deputy chief pharmacist at the Department of Health, outlined the principles on which CPD should be based (see Panel 1).

THE CPD CYCLE

The CPD cycle involves identifying training needs, deciding how to meet the needs, taking part in training activities, recording the activities and then evaluating performance after participating in those

activities (Figure 1). IAN SIMPSON, chief executive of the College of Pharmacy Practice, observed that many people fail to record what they have done.

Dr ROBERT DEWDNEY, head of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Education Division, confirmed that by the end of the year, 5,000 pharmacists will be enrolled as part of a CPD pilot study. They will receive a CPD pack and about 80 workshops will be arranged. The Society's CPD framework will be generic enough to allow pharmacists who work in different branches of the profession to tailor it to their own needs.

Dr Dewdney stated that CPD is not the same as revalidation. Revalidation, he said, cannot be achieved by undertaking CPD, as the former requires "on the job" training.

Professor MALCOLM FRIER, chairman of the Radiopharmacy Group, described a CPD programme being implemented by the Institution of Physics and Engineering in Medicine and Biology. In the scheme, CPD units can be gained from a variety of activities, including editorships, membership of editorial boards, supervising PhD theses, delivering keynote addresses, publishing in refereed journals, structured individual study, membership of event organising committees, teaching, and studying for MPhil or PhD degrees. Additional units are gained if any of these activities are examined.

Panel 1: The delivery of CPD

CPD should:

- 1 be patient centred
- 1 be focused on the needs of clinical teams
- 1 be work based
- 1 draw on occupational standards, core knowledge and skills
- 1 involve users and carers
- 1 be grounded in clinical governance
- 1 make optimal use of new technology and distance learning

TEACHER PRACTITIONERS

Dr BEN FORBES, a lecturer from King's College London called for a national network of teacher practitioners, although he was not sure where funding for such a network would come from. There is also the question of who would "train the trainers."

Dr Forbes teaches sterile products and aseptic manufacturing. He said that teacher-practitioners, or visiting lecturers, as they are referred to in the university, are invaluable in the teaching of the course because they keep abreast of current practice and developments, serve as role models and have close links with the hospitals. Nevertheless, he conceded that there were drawbacks to the use of visiting lecturers, especially as regards reliability, since work does take priority over teaching.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

MARIA CONNOLLY, aseptic services unit, University of Bath, said that since people learn differently, it is important to use a variety of teaching methods. Various forms of computer-aided learning are available, including use of the internet and intranets, CD-ROM and video clips. Computer-aided learning is useful but is not suitable when a large amount of information is involved.

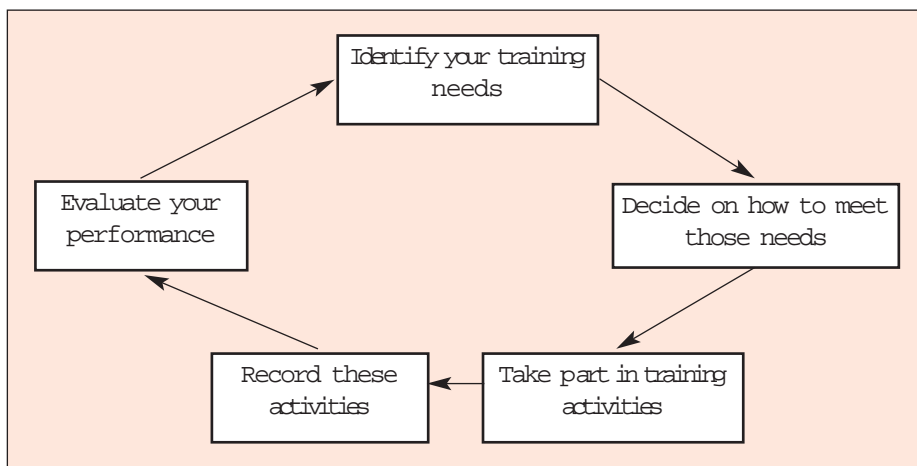


Figure 1: The CPD cycle