

# Delivering CPD support — a role for pharmacy technicians

By Nicola Arnold, RegPharmTech

Continuing professional development is an opportunity for pharmacy technicians, both in terms of reflecting on their own practice, and helping others meet CPD requirements. This article looks at the work of a specialist CPD facilitator, setting out aspects of her day-to-day role



Viewing continuing professional development as a bicycle journey can help to get started

The advent of compulsory continuing professional development (CPD) for registered pharmacy technicians is a real opportunity, as well as a responsibility. Not only does it offer pharmacy technicians the chance to reflect on elements of their own practice, but it can also provide them with a role in helping others to meet their CPD requirements.

This article sets out my work as a specialist CPD facilitator at London Pharmacy Education & Training (LPE&T), where I am seconded for two days a week from my base hospital in Guildford, Surrey.

## Background

In 1999, LPE&T launched a strategy to support CPD implementation for pharmacy staff in NHS organisations across London, Hertfordshire and Essex. The idea is that at least one member of staff from each organisation, who has an interest in CPD and some

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experience in educating others, takes on the role of local CPD facilitator and supports and encourages their colleagues in planning and carrying out their CPD. I was appointed in August 2003 to spend two days a week progressing this strategy by:

- Training new local CPD facilitators
- Supporting existing local CPD facilitators
- Liaising with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- Promoting CPD
- Advising individuals about CPD

Further details about these roles are set out below.

## Training new CPD facilitators

Those starting out as local CPD facilitators clearly need to be trained. LPE&T runs two-day training courses for those who are about to take on this role. CPD facilitators support and give feedback on the process, rather than the content of CPD, and so can be technicians or pharmacists.

An example of material covered in the training course includes a session on the “Learning to ride” theory that I developed. This is based on focusing on the CPD cycle as

a bicycle journey. Before entering the CPD cycle, it is important to learn how to ride the bicycle in order to travel effectively through a journey. CPD facilitators act as stabilisers, to help individuals learn the basics of reflecting and problem solving. The session is designed to help CPD facilitators assist individuals who are having difficulties with identifying their own learning and development needs.

## Supporting CPD facilitators

Another major part of my work involves supporting local CPD facilitators, once they have undergone their initial training. This includes providing them with updates on the latest CPD developments at CPD facilitator network meetings. These are held by LPE&T twice a year, and local CPD facilitators are encouraged to attend. Network meetings can also be good arenas to try out new methods to encourage staff to engage in CPD, particularly those for whom CPD is not (yet) compulsory (eg, technicians who have not yet registered). A recent example of a topic covered at CPD facilitator network meetings was a session on how to link CPD with the Knowledge and Skills Framework used in Agenda for Change.

Visiting local CPD facilitators is also part of the job. Many facilitators value one-to-one

guidance on writing a strategy to support CPD in their departments. Helping them often includes offering advice about, for example, using lunchtime meetings and journal clubs to introduce CPD recording formats and about other ways of incorporating CPD into working practices. I can also point out forthcoming meetings or documents on our, and other websites, that might be relevant.

During visits, I am also often asked what my “top tips” for recording CPD are. These are set out in Panel 1. Another frequent request is to demonstrate how to use the on-line version of “Plan and record”. This is the Society’s format for recording CPD. It includes sections on recording “learning that starts as reflection” (ie, where the first step is to identify a learning need) and “learning that starts as action” (ie, where something is learned from practice that has not previously been identified as a learning need). A balance of recording starting at both of these stages of the CPD cycle usually features in portfolios.

When running through the “Plan and record” format, I also emphasise that the Society have also approved the LPE&T’s CPD recording template (January 2004). Details on where to obtain CPD recording formats are set out in Panel 2 (p330).

### — Liaising with the Society

I was part of the steering group involved in adapting the Society’s “Plan and record” format (developed initially for pharmacists) for use by pharmacy technicians. This involved commenting on the various draft versions produced. In particular, as a pharmacy technician involved with CPD, I was involved in developing the case studies and exemplar CPD records to ensure their relevance for pharmacy technicians working in a variety of roles in a range of sectors of practice.

### — Promoting CPD

My work also involves promoting CPD by writing articles and speaking at conferences. For example, I have written a series of articles in the Association of Pharmacy

Technicians UK’s Pharmacy Technician Journal. These cover topics such as engaging in CPD and how to work through each of the four stages of the CPD cycle.

I also delivered a workshop at the Life Long Learning in Pharmacy Conference in June in Canada on the “Learning to ride” methods. This enabled me to network with people on an international level and gave me an insight into the progress made regarding CPD in other countries. Closer to home, I have given presentations at, for example, the Primary Care Trust Pharmacy Technicians Networks, updating members on the latest developments on CPD for pharmacy technicians and the relevance for those working in primary care. I included an opportunity to write a CPD record at the end of the session. This gave participants some practical experience of engaging in the CPD process. I have also given presentations at the Medicines Information Pharmacy Technicians Network.

### — Advising individuals

I receive a considerable number of queries from individual pharmacy technicians and pharmacists asking about their own CPD requirements.

An example that comes to mind is from a pharmacist working in a laboratory with rats, who wanted to know if he would be required to undertake CPD. I was able to advise him that CPD is not just for people working in patient care roles, but in all sectors of pharmacy. It relates to the individual’s learning and development needs, relevant to their role, so his development needs will be related to his research. The Society has developed competencies for industrial pharmacists, and so I advised him to have a look at these. Another tip I gave, and give to others working in less mainstream pharmacy roles, is to edit the competency section of the “Plan and record” format by adding in their job description, enabling them to relate CPD to aspects of their roles.

## Panel 1: “Top tips” for recording CPD

- Write up your CPD as if you were writing a story
- Make sure that you answer all the questions on any Royal Pharmaceutical Society-approved format that you use
- Be clear about what your learning need is. Learning needs should be recorded using “SMART” objectives — Specific? Measurable? Achievable? Relevant? Timely?
- Identify only one learning or development need per CPD cycle so that you can fully concentrate on that need throughout the four-stage CPD process
- When considering which learning activities to undertake, look at a range of options that are suitable for your preferred learning style. Questions to consider include:
  - What do I want to achieve from the learning?
  - What is my preferred style of learning?
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of undertaking this activity?
  - What are my alternatives?



## Summary

This article outlines the roles and responsibilities of a specialist CPD facilitator. It should be noted that it is not unusual for me to perform aspects of all of these during any given day working for LPE&T.

Supporting the local CPD facilitators, who in turn support individuals within their organisation is, in my experience, an interesting and rewarding role for a pharmacy technician to have. Needless to say, carrying out this type of work also helps me with my own CPD. Which reminds me, I need to set about writing up my latest learning need . . .

### Panel 2: Obtaining CPD recording formats

- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's "Plan and record" format is available from the following website [www.uptodate.org.uk](http://www.uptodate.org.uk)
- The London Pharmacy Education & Training CPD recording template (January 2004) (which is approved by the Society) is available at [www.londonpharmacy.nhs.uk/educationandtraining/cpd.htm](http://www.londonpharmacy.nhs.uk/educationandtraining/cpd.htm)

### Other CPD articles in recent issues of *Hospital Pharmacist*

Interested in CPD? Then you might want also to take a look at other articles on the subject that have appeared in *Hospital Pharmacist* in 2004 and 2005 all available from [www.pjonline.com](http://www.pjonline.com). These are:

- "CPD for technicians — the approach of one trust to supporting its staff" (July/August 2004:pp301–2). Written by Tess Fenn, one of the local CPD facilitators at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- "CPD for technicians — what support can the CPPE provide" (September 2004:pp349–50). Written by pharmacists at the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education, part of the workforce academy at the University of Manchester
- "CPD for hospital pharmacists — Part 1: recording and reflecting" and "Part 2— networking and advice on starting" (February 2005:pp65–72). Written by Zoë Gross

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