

What can pharmacy learn from the approach taken by accountancy to CPD?

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Pharmacists who are registered as practising members of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain have to undertake continuing professional development. From January 2006, members of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) will also have to undertake and record CPD, and they have recently been sent guidance on the new CIMA policy. Compliance with the CPD requirements is a condition of CIMA membership, but membership of CIMA, or any other professional body, is not necessarily a requirement for working as an accountant.

The approach taken by these two professions, however, is somewhat different and it may be that accountancy has something to teach pharmacy in this regard.

The CPD cycle

Let us look at the CPD cycle. Pharmacists have four stages to go through: reflection on practice, planning, action and evaluation (or reflection on learning). Accountants, however, have a six-step process: define, assess, design, act, reflect and evaluate.

Looking at these six steps in more detail, the first action — were it to be applied to pharmacy — addresses some of the comments pharmacists have made about ensuring that the CPD undertaken is relevant to the job that they do.

Accountants are expected to define their present role, and any desired future role, recognising the expectation of employers, clients, regulators and the public. They must then assess their development needs and goals to identify any knowledge or skills gaps against their current capabilities and competencies, and identify the learning and development outcomes required to meet their objectives. The design process involves choosing development activities that will meet the stated learning objectives; the development programme should be realistic and based on activities that are relevant and will best meet the needs of the individual. The development activities are then undertaken. Each development activity should be reflected upon, to consider how the activity went, what was learnt and how the learning can be applied. The outcome of each key activity must be documented, with consideration of any further development that may be required.

Finally, the practitioner should evaluate his or her record, assessing actual development against objectives, verifying the record's accuracy as an account of development during the year, and defining the extent to which the

objectives have been met. Any outstanding development issues are then carried forward into the next cycle.

Like the Society, the CIMA does not define the amount of CPD required in terms of hours or units, but advises that the individual should carry out as little or as much CPD as is necessary to be professionally competent in carrying out his or her role. Activities which may count as CPD include the following: project work; reading technical reports, articles and journals; studying for professional or academic qualifications; attending local CIMA events; online training; coaching and mentoring; observation and feedback; research; attending conferences and training events; delivering training and development; discussion groups; and secondments.

CIMA members who are not carrying out any professional work, such as those who are retired, on a career break, on maternity leave, or on long-term sick leave, may not be required to undertake CPD, although there is not a separate non-practising register. A random sample of CIMA members will be selected each year and asked to submit their CPD records, although those considered to have a high level of responsibility, including members who have direct contact with the public, are particularly likely to be included in this sample. The first members to be selected for monitoring, from January 2007, will probably be notified in advance. Members who have fully complied with the monitoring process will not be monitored two years in a row. The record must be submitted electronically, something that a number of pharmacists have complained about, but the CIMA offers several choices with regard to the form that the CPD record takes. It can be:

- The action plan contained within the online CIMA CPD planner
- A CIMA CPD record form, available on the CIMA website
- A completed employer's appraisal form or personal development plan
- A CPD record form provided for another professional body
- A record form in a format of the individual's own choice
- Confirmation that the individual's employer is accredited through "CIMA Development", the CIMA CPD employer accreditation scheme

Members who are also members of other professional bodies or who follow employer-specific CPD schemes must undertake the

CIMA CPD cycle in addition to any other programmes. This is similar to the Society's requirement, except that CIMA members may submit a CPD form from another organisation rather than having to rewrite their CPD record. CIMA members must keep their CPD records for three years; the Society's "Plan and record" document does not specify how long pharmacists' CPD records should be kept.

Support

Support for pharmacists' CPD seems to be provided mostly by the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education, with local branches of the Society and individual employers, particularly the hospital sector, also contributing. An individual pharmacist's access to CPD support and educational resources, therefore, depends largely on where they live and work, with little support for overseas pharmacists. In contrast, the CIMA is offering a range of "CPD solutions", which includes the following, in addition to the existing website and professional publications:

- An e-journal resource, which provides members with access to over 3,000 full text business and academic journals
- An online business skills resource, which provides access to management topics
- A compliance and financial management resource, which includes a range of model documents, checklists and procedures in addition to updates about business legislation and regulations
- Certificated CPD modules
- Technical publications and a technical information service
- Research reports
- Training courses, covering over 70 topics
- Local CIMA events

The emphasis on online resources, accessed through a single website, means that accountants will generally be able to undertake CPD activities more easily than many pharmacists will.

CPD is being rolled out to all CIMA members at once, and the information brochure contains final, rather than draft, information. The CPD package for CIMA members, therefore, seems to be more user-friendly than that for pharmacists, particularly with regard to the way in which CPD records may be submitted. The general resources and support provided by CIMA also appear, in my view, to be superior to those provided by the Society.