

Continuous professional development (CPD): What, How, and When to incorporate into clinical practice? Reflections from the United Kingdom

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1. What is CPD?

CPD is defined as “any learning outside of undergraduate education or postgraduate training that helps you maintain and improve your performance. It covers the development of your knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours across all areas of your professional practice. It includes both formal and informal learning activities.”^[1]

Continuing Medical Education (CME) refers to the development of the same but is only applicable to doctors.^[2] The terms CME and CPD are often used interchangeably in literature and during educational events. It is important to recognise the difference. The term CPD is more inclusive and has a wider reach to develop multidisciplinary and multi-professional teams. CPD is going to be used here in this article as it incorporates wider developmental domains than CME.

The purpose of CPD is to maintain high-quality care for patients, the public and ensure high standards of teams and services. Knowledge and expertise in medicine is increasingly developing at a faster pace than ever. Therefore, what is a known practice today may not be relevant tomorrow.^[1]

In the United Kingdom, the doctors' regulator, the General Medical Council (GMC), requires doctors to undertake CPD that covers the whole scope of their professional practice. This includes NHS work, independent practice, voluntary work that involves patients and professional activities such as education, manage-

ment and research. It is not expected that CPD should cover every area every year but spread throughout the five years revalidation cycle. Therefore, doctors should ensure all aspects are covered adequately over the five-year cycle. Each doctor's CPD should be reviewed and discussed at their annual appraisal.^[1]

2. Medical practice framework

Medical practice is subject to satisfactory registration and oversight of a regulator. Doctors must be able to demonstrate the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours in order for patients to trust them with their lives and health. Therefore, doctors must be expected to adhere to practice standards. The GMC has set four broad domains that involve:^[3]

- 1) Knowledge, skills and performance
- 2) Safety and quality
- 3) Communication, partnership and teamwork
- 4) Maintaining trust

3. Types of CPD

There are three types of CPD based on the sources of the activity:^[4]

- 1) External CPD: Any CPD from outside the employing organisation. This includes but is not limited to conferences (regional, national, international), whether streamed live or attended in person. E-learning can be included in this category.

- CPD is “any learning outside undergraduate education or postgraduate training.
- Each doctor’s CPD should be reviewed and discussed at their annual appraisal.
- CPD is of three types; external, internal and personal.
- It ensures the development of own and team skills to fulfil requirements for professional practice.

- 2) Internal CPD: activities designed and delivered by the employing organisation, for example, grand rounds, local governance meetings, update meetings (including journal clubs), and mandatory training.
- 3) Personal CPD: this includes reading journals, preparing for educational activities (e.g. talks, lectures, tutorials, problem-based learning sessions etc.) and writing articles.

In some countries, there are minimum requirements and limits to each type of CPD. In the UK, The Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom sets the annual credit recommendations as follows:^[4]

- Minimum total credits 50 hours
- Minimum external clinical credits 25 hours
- Recommended external non-clinical credits 5 hours

4. Principles of incorporating CPD into professional practice

Steps of undertaking the relevant CPD can follow the following framework (Figure 1):

- 1) Identify the scope of practice: this involves medical work (public and/or private), voluntary work, and any other roles, for example, education and leadership/management.
- 2) Identify learning needs based on the scope of practice. When setting those learning needs remember to use SMART learning needs (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Realistic, Time-bound).
- 3) Create a plan for reflection for each event/activity attended. This will in turn generate themes to discuss and present at the annual appraisal.
- 4) Incorporate the above into an annual ap-

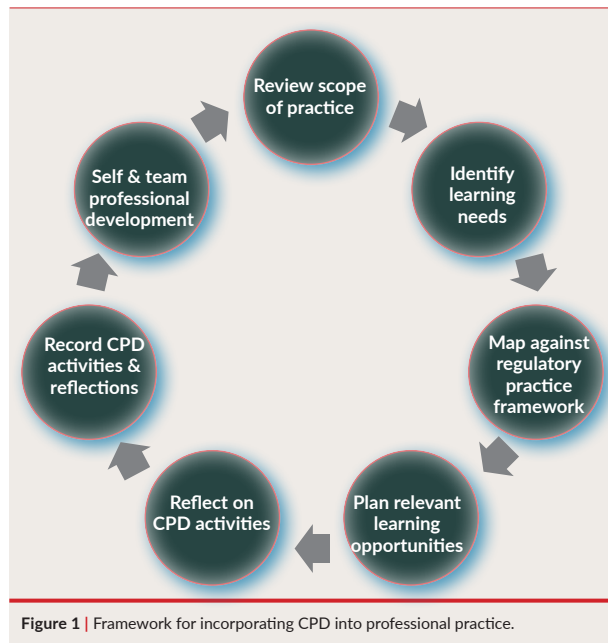


Figure 1 | Framework for incorporating CPD into professional practice.

praisal to ensure the scope of practice and learning needs are assessed regularly. This, in turn, will feed into the revalidation cycle mandated by the regulator. This cycle is mandated by the GMC every five years in the UK.

5. Worked example

Below is an example of a consultant job plan that involves clinical, educational and governance roles. The learning needs have been identified at the annual appraisal and require achievement in 1 year. The framework in Table 1 illustrates how to design a plan for CPD based on this example.

- You are a consultant physician with a special interest in gastroenterology. The scope of practice includes supervising postgraduate trainees (you have been newly appointed as an educational supervisor).

Table 1: Worked example of how to plan and reflect on learning needs and CPD.

Scope of work	Task	Learning needs	Plan for CPD	Type of CPD	GMC Good Medical Practice domain	Reflection	Learning outcomes achieved, remaining needs moving forward
Consultant gastroenterologist	Take an active role in implementing the accreditation process for the endoscopy unit	How to accredit my endoscopy unit	Attend training for accreditation Lead and develop a local work-ing group to implement accreditation	External clinical	1 (knowledge skills, and performance) 3 (communication, partnership and teamwork)		
	Learn about and implement the new technique in colonoscopy	Learn new technique How to plan and agree new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)	External course on the new technique Research how to write SOP and submit to the governance committee	External clinical	1 (knowledge skills, and performance) 2 (safety and quality)		
	Appointed as a new educational supervisor	Accreditation as an educational supervisor	Course for Educational Supervisor training How to gather feedback from trainees about training experience	Internal	1 (knowledge skills, and performance) 3 (communication, partnership and teamwork) 4 (maintaining trust)		



Figure 2 | Royal College of Physicians CPD diary worked example illustrating 1 year of data.

- Weekly clinics in gastroenterology. Endoscopy lists weekly. The principal clinician on the gastroenterology ward.
- This year, the endoscopy unit at your hospital is involved in the process of accreditation, which is happening for the first time in the history of the unit.
- A new technique is also being implemented in conducting colonoscopies at the unit.

6. Where to record CPD

It is essential to record CPD in a diary that is accessible and easy to use. There are a number of software and websites that record that. For example, as a member of the Royal College of Physicians, access to the Federation Online CPD diary is free and keeps a record of the total number of hours. There is also an app that can be installed on smartphones/tablets to ease the capture of CPD. Figure 2 illustrates how the CPD is calculated per year. Link <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/education-practice/assessment-and-cpd>.

CONCLUSION

CPD is essential in driving the quality of clinical care provided to patients. It ensures the

development of own and team skills to fulfil requirements for professional practice bound by the regulatory framework of practice. This article illustrated an example based on the current UK regulatory framework of practice and CPD requirements. Learning should be viewed as a continuous cycle of development.

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Abbreviations list: Continuous Medical Education (CME), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), General Medical Council (GMC), Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Realistic, Time-bound (SMART), United Kingdom (UK).

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