

The Imperative of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the South-east Asian (SEA) Region

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Introduction

The Southeast Asian (SEA) Region, characterized by its diverse cultures, burgeoning economies, and dynamic workforce, faces a pivotal challenge in maintaining competitiveness and ensuring sustainable development in the health sector. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Region accounts for more than a quarter of the global population, spanning over 11 member states (WHO, 2024). Globalization and technological advancement have spearheaded health sector growth in the 21st century, the requirement for a highly skilled and adaptable workforce has become crucial. Rapid advances in medical technology, pharmacology, evidence-based practice etc. have led to a continuously evolving healthcare landscape. In this dynamic environment, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is essential for medical professionals to maintain and enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies, and has become a mandated requirement for healthcare professionals to retain their credentials and right to practice. CPD encompasses the ongoing enhancement of knowledge, attitudes and skills that healthcare professionals engage in beyond their initial training, aimed at updating and advancing their knowledge, skills, and professional competency (Giri *et al.*, 2012).

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Importance of CPD for Medical Professionals

Enhancing Clinical Competence: CPD provides medical professionals with the opportunity to stay current with the latest clinical guidelines, medical technologies, and treatment protocols. Considering on an individual level, healthcare professionals can enhance their knowledge and skills i.e. understanding illnesses, best practices, and broader factors that affect health and care, and improve their clinical performance such as better adherence to guidelines and incorporating best practices (Allen *et al.*, 2019). Hence, this continuous learning process is essential for maintaining clinical competence and ensuring that healthcare providers can deliver evidence-based care (Allen *et al.*, 2019).

Improving Patient Outcomes: At the organizational level, such as in hospitals and educational institutions, CPD can lead to the development of new protocols and policies, as well as updated curricula and teaching methods for training healthcare professionals (Allen *et al.*, 2019). The study conducted by the Forsetlund *et al.* (2009) has shown a direct correlation between CPD and improved patient outcomes. Healthcare professionals who engage in regular CPD activities are more likely to adhere to best practices, reduce medical errors, and enhance the overall quality of care. Furthermore, CPD allows the healthcare workforce to adapt and more effectively address patients' needs and the constantly changing practice environment. This can ultimately result in improved care and better health outcomes (WHO, 2013).

Addressing Emerging Health Challenges: The SEA Region faces notable health challenges,

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