

Grade Medical Officers perception towards lifelong learning; a mixed method study

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Abstract

Introduction: Baseline information on lifelong learning and CPD activities of Grade Medical Officers (GMOs) are essential to develop CPD provision guidelines. The aim of this study was to find out baseline information on lifelong learning and CPD activities of GMOs.

Method: A complementarity design was used to collect baseline information regarding lifelong learning and CPD activities of GMOs. Data were collected from grade medical officers and CPD leads. A tailor made questionnaire was used to collect data from 422 GMOs representing different hospital categories in the Central Province. Island wide CPD leads (38) were inquired on organization of CPD for doctors through a semi structured interview. The frequencies were calculated for quantitative data and qualitative data were analysed by means of content analysis.

Results: A vast majority of GMOs (98%) perceived CPD as a requirement although around 50% were willing to undertake mandatory CPD. The preferred learning methods of the GMOs' were reading (21.0%), work based learning (17.5%), problem solving approach (16.9%) and interactive approach (14.9%) respectively. The most prominent among the revealed 27 recently practiced learning methods were, "discussing with seniors" (40.4%), "reading" (27.1%) and "e learning" (15.4%). Learning needs of GMOs seem to be averagely addressed in major hospitals while it is reported to be poorly addressed in peripheries. The majority of the CPD organizing bodies indicated that they were not that satisfied with the CPD activities provided by them and it also revealed that structured CPD activities through needs analysis with proper planning and feedback are yet to be developed in Sri Lanka. Issues of funding, lack of resources, lack of motivation and poor support from the higher authorities were identified as challenges for CPD provision.

Conclusions: GMOs' perceive CPD as a dire need, most preferred learning methods and their practiced learning methods rely so much on immediately available learning resources, which have characteristics of familiarity, applicability and accessibility. The majority of CPD organizing bodies in Sri Lanka is yet to establish an objective driven plan for CPD.

Key words: CPD, CME, Lifelong learning, Learning needs, Learning theories

Introduction

Lifelong learning is described as "continuation of medical education with an ongoing process of professional development, which is closely linked to self-assessment that allows physicians to maintain requisite knowledge, skills and professional standards" (Madewell, 2004).

CPD is defined as any learning outside undergraduate education or postgraduate training that helps you maintain, improve your performance. It covers the development of doctors' knowledge, skills and attitudes and behaviors across all areas of one's professional practice. It also includes both formal and informal learning activities (GMC, 2012). Hence, lifelong learning remains an excellent tool for CPD. Since practice of medicine and its underlying knowledge are changing considerably (Towle, 1996) dedication to lifelong learning and being up to date with changing medical practices should be the commitment of every doctor (Rancich *et al.*, 2005; Bandaranayake, 2009).

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It is reasonable to state that government policies in relation to CPD development are at



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