

Continuous Professional Development in the Sri Lankan Health System: Past, Present and Future

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Abstract

Introduction: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a system of practice that plays an integral part in honing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and mindsets of healthcare professionals leading to improved patient experiences and better health outcomes, the world over. CPD in the Sri Lankan context is at the cusp of a monumental achievement. Following many years of discussions and setbacks, the National Continuous Professional Development (NCPD) framework has finally reached operational status with pilot programs being planned in several districts.

Methodology: we referred to local literature, official documents and various research studies centered around CPD in an effort to detail the history of CPD activities in Sri Lanka, the establishment of the NCPD framework, the obstacles encountered during previous attempts of implementation, the journey thus far and the way forward for a sustainable, long-lasting NCPD program that is beneficial for all Grade Medical Officers (GMOs) and health professionals later on.

Results: Findings included uptake of a wide array of e-learning modalities following the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple research studies showed that stakeholders were satisfied with the cost-effectiveness, heightened productivity, convenience, flexibility and information accessibility offered by web-based CPD initiatives. However, the underdeveloped digital infrastructure remained the main drawback of adopting e-learning strategies in our context.

Conclusion: E-learning platforms that gained traction during the COVID-19 pandemic have become a boon to actualizing the NCPD program together with the steps taken to strengthen the local digital infrastructure. This promises to mark the next major era of Medical Education in the country.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Development, Medical Education, Emerging Trends, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The Sri Lankan university education system has been lauded the world-over, for producing medical professionals of the highest caliber (Siribaddana et al., 2012) who have, over the years, taken up positions in highly reputed institutions and accepted to posts in various esteemed organizations based on their exemplary academic and professional record

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(University of Colombo, 2023). With proven evidence of CPD participation and physician performance in practice (Wenghofer et al., 2014) there is an urgent need to re-evaluate its relevance in the local context and initiate an effective, sustainable CPD framework with high yields.

CPD includes all activities undertaken by doctors who have concluded their training and are in independent practice - formally and informally- to maintain, update, develop and enhance their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours in response to the needs of their patients (World Federation for Medical Education, 2015). In the past, medical



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