



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of the American Pharmacists Association

journal homepage: www.japha.org

COMMENTARY

Advancing learning to advance pharmacy practice

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 July 2017

Accepted 14 November 2017

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The objectives of this commentary are to: 1) describe advancements in the continuing professional development (CPD) model over the past decade; 2) detail an updated CPD cycle; and 3) describe how practitioners' adoption of the CPD approach may facilitate the advancement of pharmacy practice.

Summary: CPD is a self-directed, ongoing, systematic, and outcomes-focused approach to an individual's lifelong learning that is applied into practice. The 6 components of reflect, plan, learn, evaluate, apply, and record + review, described in a revised depiction of the CPD cycle, have evolved over the past 10 years alongside the evolution of the profession of pharmacy. The thinking around the value of building CPD habits has also advanced. New emphasis is being placed on mechanisms for applying and sharing CPD-related work, as well as the importance of employer support of CPD.

Conclusion: As practice change has progressed, the individual's need to learn has also changed. To succeed in the evolving health care system, regular, robust, and intentional CPD is needed. Moreover, for learning to have maximum impact, it must facilitate, motivate and result in changes in learner behavior. Employers, educators, and pharmacy organizations should facilitate lifelong learning by creating CPD supportive environments that foster learner success and community. The adoption of a CPD approach by pharmacy practitioners may facilitate the advancement of pharmacy practice.

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Advancing the practice of learning

The model for continuing pharmacy education (CPE) has not substantively changed in the past 50 years, whereas the demands and expectations of the pharmacy practitioner have tremendously evolved. New standards of care, therapeutic approaches, and pressure for accountability are driving the need for new competencies and the need to advance practice. In essence, evolving practice demands evolving practitioners.

Disclosure: Michael J. Rouse is an employee of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, which accredits providers of continuing pharmacy education. The authors declare no additional conflicts of interest with any product or service mentioned in the article, including grants (pending or received), gifts, stock holdings or options, honoraria, consultancies, expert testimony, patents, and royalties for all authors and members of their immediate families.

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Our system for learning has not adequately supported our progress in pharmacy.¹ To adapt to the rapidly changing environment, regular, robust, and effective learning is a necessity. Continuing professional development (CPD), as a specifically defined learning model, was introduced in pharmacy in the United States in the early 2000s. Over the past decade, recognition of the need for improved approaches to lifelong learning for all health professionals, including pharmacists, has grown.² To create meaningful changes in health care delivery, attention is being paid to interprofessional team learning models.^{3–5} In addition, an emphasis on reflective practice can encourage learning from one's own experiences and those of others and is seen as a means to support learning and change.^{6–8} Just as practitioners engage in Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, the CPD cycle aims to meet the specific goals and objectives of individual practitioners by encouraging practice assessment, intentional action, and application of learning for improvement. The practice of pharmacy is advancing; now is the time for the practice of learning to advance as well. The objectives of the present commentary are to: 1) describe advancements in the model over the past

Key Points**Background:**

- As practice change has progressed, the individual's need to learn has also changed.
- Regular, robust, and intentional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is needed to help close practice gaps.

Findings:

- As work with CPD has matured over the last 10 years, the value of building CPD habits, the emphasis on applying and sharing CPD-related work, and the importance of employer support have emerged as key variables in successful CPD.

decade; 2) detail an updated CPD cycle; and 3) describe how practitioners' adoption of the CPD approach may facilitate the advancement of pharmacy practice.

CPD as an expanded model for learning in pharmacy

CPD is a model to foster and support lifelong learning.⁹ It is a self-directed, ongoing, systematic, and outcomes-focused approach to an individual's lifelong learning that is applied to practice.^{10,11} It involves active participation in formal and informal learning activities that assist in developing and maintaining competence, enhancing professional practice, and supporting achievement of career goals. CPD goes beyond maintenance of the minimal level of competence required by regulation; it is not a replacement for CPE but rather an essential mechanism for each pharmacist to sustain and enhance competence. Various types of educational activities and learning opportunities that do not constitute formal CPE can prove to be valuable as part of one's CPD, such as teaching and precepting students, job shadowing, participating in journal clubs, expanding patient care services, and implementing performance improvement projects.¹² CPD

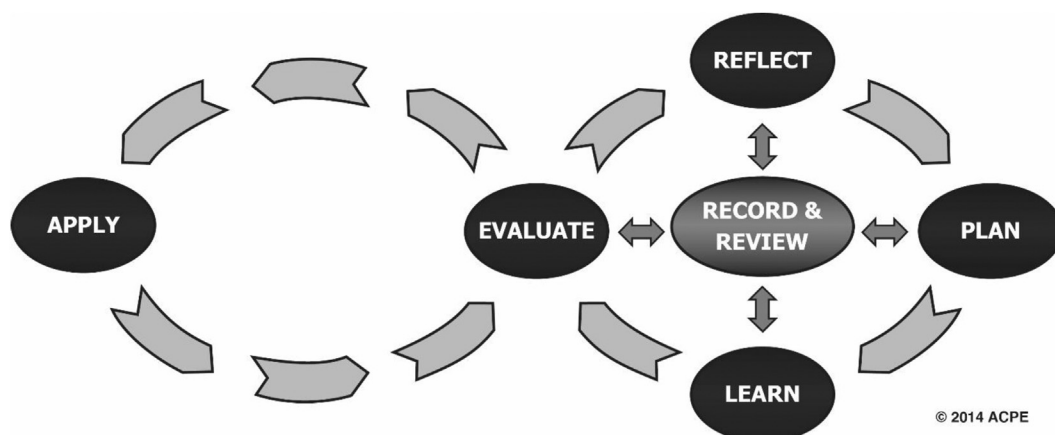
acknowledges all activities can contribute to professional development, including work-based learning. This individualized CPD approach also allows for flexibility in selecting and engaging in learning activities that are most beneficial to one's particular practice or work—for example, patient care, research, administration, or industry. Whereas the learning benefits for pharmacists have been readily acknowledged, the importance of CPD for pharmacy technicians has also been emphasized as their role has matured. The benefits for other health professionals also have been acknowledged, as well as the benefits of CPD for interprofessional teams.

A way to learn and close practice gaps

The CPD cycle fosters an intentional approach to advancing one's competence. It is an ongoing learning and development cycle in which individual learners reflect on their practice, assess their knowledge and skills, identify learning needs and goals, create a personal learning plan, implement the plan, apply the learning in practice, and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and the outcomes and impact of learning (Figure 1). The CPD model is sound; it incorporates strategies for effective learning.

Dopp et al. summarized these strategies (Table 1).¹³ CPD has been demonstrated to be effective in achieving sustained learning and changes in behavior and performance.¹⁴ Furthermore, it focuses the learner's energy and attention on important and relevant practice gaps and career goals.

Connecting the “classroom” with the workplace is emphasized in the Institute of Medicine's report “Redesigning Continuing Education in the Health Professions.”² For any health professional, learning that addresses practice gaps will be more meaningful and impactful. The focus of the learning is derived from an assessment of practice, including patient, organizational, and societal needs that require attention (Figure 2). For example, after practice and personal assessment, the focus of the learning may be driven by an institutional commitment to improve quality of care or access, the desire to begin a new service, the need to meet a patient care metric, the possibility of expanding the pharmacist's role on an interprofessional team, or any number of other practice-relevant issues. To that end, the individual practitioner is



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Figure 1. The continuing professional development cycle: application of an individual's learning to advance his or her practice.

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