

# What is CPD and *what do we have to do?*

CPD or Continuing Professional Development is one of the things that we will have to become familiar with as GDC registrants in the next few years. At the moment, CPD is only compulsory for dentists, but it will be brought in for the rest of the team from 2008. **Naomi Scott** investigates what might be asked of the dental team in the future.

**T**he GDC are still working on how and what the CPD requirements will be for all registrants, but we can look to the requirements currently asked of dentists as a guide to what may be asked of the rest of the team in time.

#### What is CPD?

CPD is defined by the GDC' as 'study, training, courses, seminars, reading and other activities undertaken by a registrant, which could reasonably be expected to advance his or her professional development.'

#### How much do we have to do?

This has yet to be decided by the GDC, the current requirement for dentists is 250 hours of CPD over a 5 year period. This works out at 50 hours per year but doesn't have to be done like that. Of these 250 hours, 75 must be classed as verifiable.

#### Why do we have to do it?

All dental professionals have a duty to keep their skills and knowledge up to date right through their working life. Very often we are learning much of the time and take this for granted. As the DLA website explains, "It is

only when we come to write a summary of our... achievements and experiences that we wonder how we managed to arrive at our current position..."<sup>22</sup> You have probably been doing it already, but with registration will come the responsibility of recording your CPD activities (ie attendance at courses, seminars etc.) to remain on the register and to continue working.

#### How will the GDC know if I do my requirement or not?

Every year, the GDC asks dentists to complete an annual return recording the CPD activities that they have done in the last year. The return of this information is a legal requirement and registrants will not be able to remain on the register if they do not comply. At the end of a 5 year cycle, the GDC asks to see the full CPD records of randomly selected registrants. We can assume that a similar system will operate for the DCP registrants.

#### So if I go on lots of courses I should be fine?

Yes and no. CPD is not just about going on courses, it is about updating your professional knowledge and improving your personal

competence. If you go on a course about something that you are already good at, you aren't improving, just staying the same. Your CPD should be carefully planned: decide what direction you want your career to take and then take the options (courses, seminars, reading, etc.) that will get you there.

#### Sounds like lots of paperwork to me?

Yes you need to be organised, but it doesn't take much: a plan of the skills that you want to improve upon, activities that you can do to help you achieve that improvement, an assessment to say whether you have managed to improve in the way you wanted to. This of course is a cyclical situation, improving in one area will make you see where else you would like to improve or open your eyes to other specialties. You also need to record which of your CPD activities are verifiable and which are general.

#### What's the difference between general CPD and verifiable CPD?

Dentists must do 75 hours verifiable CPD every 5 years. The quantity for the rest of the dental team is yet to be decided (if in fact it will be measured like this). There are 4 criteria that you need to measure a CPD

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activity against to test whether it is verifiable.<sup>1</sup>

1. You must get a certificate or documentary evidence from the course provider or organiser that you took part in the activity; and it should state how many hours were spent on the activity. Keep this certificate for your CPD file.
2. The activity must have clear educational aims and objectives
3. The activity must have clear expected outcomes
4. The activity must have a feedback mechanism where you have the chance to say what you thought of the activity with a view to improving it if necessary.

If a CPD activity does not meet all of these requirements then you cannot count it towards verifiable CPD hours, but it does not mean that you should not attend or participate. It still counts towards your personal development and can be included as a general CPD activity. Don't forget to record your attendance in your own records though.

Activities that can be counted as general CPD for example are: private study, background research, reading journals (such as *Vital*), see the box below for more examples.

The GDC is currently consulting on what the best approach to CPD would be for the dental team. It is likely to be based around the model described here. The GDC hopes to improve on the current CPD system for dentists (for example by including some core compulsory subjects by 1 Jan, 2007) and then introduce compulsory CPD for the rest of

the registered team from 2008. If you have any comments to make to this consultation or would like to see the full consultation document, visit the GDC website at [www.gdc-uk.org](http://www.gdc-uk.org) and click on 'Revalidation consultation'. But don't delay, the consultation period ends on March 16th.

#### References

- 1 *Compulsory Continuing Professional Development: what it means for you.* General Dental Council
- 2 *CPD and the future* <http://www.dla.org.uk/issues/education/cpd01.php>

#### CPD Activities

- Courses and lectures
- Vocational training or general professional training study days
- Educational parts of professional and specialist society meetings
- Peer review and clinical audits
- Distance learning
- Multimedia learning (web-based or CD-ROM)
- Staff training
- Educational workshops at conferences
- Reading journals
- Background research
- Private study amongst others

#### Some proposed changes to the current system under consultation:

The addition of 4 core subjects which all registrants, including DCPs may have to do verifiable CPD in:

- Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR);
- Cross-infection control;
- Legal and ethical issues;
- Handling complaints.

A fifth possible subject for dentists only:

- Radiography and radiation protection

#### Recording CPD

Always make a note of:

- The date of the activity
- The venue (if applicable)
- The organisation running the activity
- Verifiable or general CPD
- Number of hours spent on the activity