

Opinions on Continuing Professional Development

(Is the development of professional competencies for medical personnel careers a necessary step in the improvement of quality medical services in the country?) by Thengo Kavinya

The Medical Council of Malawi whose motto is protecting the general public and guiding the medical profession was established by the Medical Practitioners and Dentists Act No. 17 of 1987 and became operational in February 1988. Among one of its many functions the council promotes liaison in the field of medical training in Malawi and also promotes the standards of such training in Malawi.

The Council's duties in relation to medical and related education and training can be regarded as one of its primary functions. It controls and exercises authority on the training of persons in the performance of diagnosis, treatment or prevention of physical or mental defects, illnesses or deficiencies in human beings. In addition, the Council has full responsibility for approving external examiners for Paramedical and Allied Health Professionals. From the 1st May, 2008, the Council is launching Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The program entails that medical practitioners have to accrue a minimum of 50 points a year in order for their licenses to be approved. Points can be obtained through courses, workshops, meetings, publications of papers and presentations that are medical related. I asked a few people their opinions on this new program.

James Segula

Clinical officer, Mlambe Mission Hospital

"I know CPD exists but that it usually applies to top medical personnel in the hospitals. "Imagine a whole hospital can have one or two computers and that is for the doctor and the secretary so how would you expect us to access Internet so that we stay up to date. I attend one or two courses within the country but my seniors can attend almost a course or a workshop each week."

Chimwemwe Chakholoma

Nursing student, Kamuzu College of Nursing

"As far as I know most nurses update through long service. I don't believe that the government sends nurses for further education abroad or organizes workshops, what I know is that our matrons have been there for quite a period of time and that is why they are able to recognize some of the diseases".

Fresier Chidyaonga Maseko

Research officer, Division of Community Health, College of Medicine

"Continuing professional development is vital because it helps medical personnel's to get updated in this century when new diseases are ever emerging and developing resistance to drugs. There is a need to identify needs of clinical and medical officers practising in the country in order to propose a package of CPD activities from the government so that they are met in a cost effective way and to limit the problem of profession isolation and to make medical work in rural areas professionally satisfying."

John Chaziya

Third year student, College of Medicine

"I do not know anything about CPD points. All I know is that the Medical Council of Malawi introduced a registration fee to the students but is not clear as to what this money is used upon."

Kaponda Masiye,

Final year student, College of Medicine

"It is a must for each and every medical student to indulge in research not only at school but also when there in the profession. Diseases and epidemics are becoming increasingly resistant to drugs each and every day and research or further training would help medical personnel to have new ideas of combating these diseases. In Malawi CPD is confined to medical officers in the urban areas unlike the rural areas where there are usually more disease outbreaks. Medical officers in urban areas have got access to computers and electronic services and it is very likely that they will have access to CPD materials unlike those in rural areas."

Professor R Broadhead

Principal, College of Medicine

"The college accepts that medical education is a continuous and life long process and that is why we recognize the importance of a strong academic foundation for a successful medical career thus we seek to inculcate good principles of medical practice in candidates to equip them for a good medical future."