CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Learning is an evolving process, which involves acquisition of new knowledge and experiences interpreted by comparing with the already sought knowledge and experiences (Wilson, 2013). Continuing professional development comprises of a process of lifelong learning (Yfantis, Tiniakou, & Yfanti, 2010). Wilson (2013) stated that failure of nurses in participation in CPD activities leads to resistance to change. The reluctance of management in providing funding and resources for conducting CPD activities provoked lack of interest in CPD activities among nurses (Scott, 2011).

Literature identified many factors, which motivated nurses in participating in CPD activities. These includes gaining knowledge (Mizuno-Lewis et al., 2014), learning new skills (Kleib, Sales, Lima, Andrea-Baylon, & Beaith, 2010) and acquisition of credentials (Williams, 2014). Some authors also found other factors such as to give quality care to patients (Cleary, Horsfall, O'Hara-Aarons, Jackson, & Hunt, 2011) and to obtain knowledge to achieve professional status (Chong & Sellick, 2011) as motivators.

Participating in CPD activities among nurses is directly related to nursing competency (Kleib et al., 2010). Even though it is beneficial to practising nurses, researchers have found out that barriers present within nursing practice posed as a challenge for nurses to participate in CPD activities (Penz et al., 2007). A study conducted by Evans (2007) on midwives who completed post registration course showed that lack of support from colleagues

and supervisors hindered their participation in professional education activities. Lack of knowledge and awareness was also found out to be one factor in a research conducted for nurses in Trinidad and Tobago (Denise Israel-Richardson, 2013). Furthermore, Arungwa (2014) stated that participation in CPD programs was directly related to better nursing practice. He also identified additional barriers to CPD as the timing of duty, increased workload, shortage of staff, ignorance, lack of interest, lack of motivation by nurse managers, lack of incentives from the institution and family challenges. Staniland, Rosen and Wild (2011), reported poor management of CPD opportunities by nurse managers and senior nurses leading to a duplication of same staff attending most of the activities.

Since nurses work on shift duty basis, there is lack of opportunity to participate in CPD for nurses doing different duties (Clark et al., 2015). In addition, the shortage of staff in different areas lead to the inability of supervisors in releasing the staff for CPD activities during working hours (Staniland et al., 2011). Nurses are known to learn from awkward situations in their clinical practice, which they perceive as learning opportunities (Khomeiran, Yekta, Kiger, & Ahmadi, 2006). Although many researchers emphasize on the importance of provision of appropriate training to nurses according to their specialty they are posted in (Hazelhof, Gerritsen, Schoonhoven, & Koopmans, 2014). Studies conducted in various countries have shown a negative influence in learning opportunities by certain avoidable factors such as nursing shortages, lack of accessible or relevant programs and lack of educators in the clinical setting (Nash, Stuart-Hamilton, & Mayer, 2014).

Similarly in Maldivian context too there are issues in CPD programs. These include lack of funding, lack of opportunities, staff shortage to releases nurses for CPDs, as well as lack of motivation or interest. Though CPDS is offered in ad hoc basis in clinical settings, an audit tool can be used to analyze the situation.

Audit Plan

Following is a plan that can be used for auditing of continuing professional development includes the following.

1. **Identification of the issue.** : The issue can be identified using a tool an audit too.
2. **Setting goals to achieve**: After identifying the issue, the audit will reveal the loopholes in the current practice. Goals need to be set to combat these particular issues.
3. **Identifying the necessary change**:   The recommendations for change need to be identified which are relevant to the goals set.
4. **Implementing the change**: The change should be implemented and difficulties identified.
5. **Assessing the effect of change:** Once the implementation is completed, an evaluation should be done and the success and challenges identified. These challenges will go through the same change process.

Recommendations and suggestions for continuing professional development

Strategies need to be formulated to help in making the best use of CPD opportunities and promoting mechanisms to support staff at different levels to actively engage in CPD.

Recommendation	Adequate resources should be allocated for conducting the CPD programs

The hospital management together with the nursing department and ward managers should be supportive to nurses working under them to promote their participation in the CPD programs.

Recommendation	CPD should be made compulsory

Attaining a certain number of CPD hours is compulsory for registration in many nursing bodies internationally. It is

necessary that the nurses update their knowledge and skill level with recent developments in the field.

Recommendation	**CPD programs must be relevant and appropriate and schedule should be available to all the staff**

The programs conducted should be convenient and accessible for the staff. Conducting the educational programs within the working environment and during the working hours, in a way that most of the staff are able to attend should be considered.

Recommendation	**A unit for conducting CPD programs should be established and an effective system for monitoring and evaluating these programs should be set up.**

A separate unit for nursing CPD programs need to be established and policies for conducting and evaluating these programs need to be produced.

Conclusion

CPD is an important part of a service providing profession such as nursing. Through CPD quality of care will be continually improved as well as nurses themselves will be more competent and confident healthcare professionals. CPD is offered in some healthcare institutions and its effectives can be measured through an audit tool, which can provide recommendations for further improvement.

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