

DentCPD: Guidelines for Harmonisation and Standardisation of Continuing Professional Development

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Objectives: Free movement of dental professionals across the European Union calls for more uniform continuing education in dentistry to ensure up to date high quality patient care and patient safety. One of the aims of the DentCPD programme (#509961-LLP-1-2010-1-UK-ERASMUS-EMHE) is to provide guidelines for the management and delivery of high quality continuing professional development (CPD) by all European dental CPD providers and, thus, make dental CPD more transparent to all relevant parties and to facilitate the transferability of earned credits.

Methods: These guidelines are based on an extensive literature inventory and survey of existing practices in dental CPD. Drafts of this document have been presented and discussed during meetings of the Association for Dental Education in Europe in 2010 and 2011.

Results: These guidelines include the following suggestions for structure, pedagogical elements including assessment, and quality assurance of CPD. (i) Every dentist should actively seek for up-to-date knowledge, understanding and skills improvement throughout the career. Opportunities to achieve this aspiration should be made readily available for all dentists. (ii) The providers and educators of CPD should be quality-approved and impartial. (iii) The mode of CPD delivery should suit the educational intentions with clear learning objectives, forming larger learning entities extending over a longer time period. (iv) The quality assurance of CPD activities should generally include an assessment of the learning objective(s). Participant feedback should be collected, analyzed and reported to providers and educators to inform future developments and improvements. (v) A pan-European system of credit points should be used and recorded using a clear certificate.

Conclusion: These guidelines - directed to aid all dental professionals, learners and educators as well as providers of dental CPD, and authorities - enable better quality control within dentistry, resulting in enhanced dental care and improvement of patient safety.