

Continuing
professional
development to
maintain knowledge
and understanding
nursi...



In a changing world, competence becomes more than just a level of knowledge, skills and behaviours used to improve performance. In order to achieve continuous competence, learning and development must be continued. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is incredibly important in the health care system as rules, ideas and values are being assessed and broadened, therefore the professionals should maintain the knowledge and understanding of this, in order to continue competence.

The Oxford Dictionary defines competence as the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. By my understanding, professional competency is a person's values, attitudes, habits, skills and practices that are based on a theory-guided, evidenced-based discipline. To be competent is to have understanding, confidence and a level of knowledge based within a competency standard. Competencies are not only defined by a person's ability to fulfil their duties as a care giver but to have a greater understanding of every aspect that makes a nurse. A competent nurse has healthy partnerships with both patients and colleagues by understanding what makes a safe practice, showing independence, efficient time management skills, demonstrating clinical skills, utilising resources available, understanding the broad health care system and showing work ethics. Competency standards are based on the boundaries of practice, the standards set by the nurse, using a holistic approach, expectations set by the nurse, the practice and the national standard and also the nurses' consistency.

Standards are used as framework for testing competency. The Australian Nursing and Midwife Council (ANMC) have a National Competency Standards
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for the Registered Nurse. Each of these standards complies with a level of competency. With the standards evolving with the change of community this shows why continuing professional development is important.

The Australian Nursing and Midwife Council have decided these standards into “ domains”. Professional practice, critical thinking and analysis, provision and coordination of care and collaborative and therapeutic practice. (ANMC, 2005)

Professional practice is in relation to the professional, legal and ethical responsibilities. This includes basic knowledge of the legislation affecting nursing, health care and protecting individuals and group rights. (ANMC, 2005)

This includes practicing in accordance with relevant legislation and common law, Fulfilling the duty of care and working within an ethical nursing framework. (ANMC, 2005)

Critical thinking and analysis relates to professional development and evidence and research for practice in the health care system. This includes reflection on practice, feelings, beliefs and the consequences of individuals and groups. (ANMC, 2005)

Provision and coordination of care is exactly that, as well as the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of care. (ANMC, 2005)

Collaborative and therapeutic practice is the establishing, sustaining and concluding professional relationships with individuals and groups. This also

includes the nurses' competencies within an interdisciplinary health care team. (ANMC, 2005)

In achieving competence a health care professional must as comply with a code of Ethics. This code can be found on The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council website. This code relates to ethics and morality used in within the standards of health care. This Code outlines the nursing profession's commitment to respect, promote, protect and uphold the fundamental rights of people who are both the recipients and providers of nursing and health care. (ANMC, 2005) The purpose of this code of ethics is for nurses in Australia to be able to identify the ethical standards and values in which have been incorporated within the nursing guidelines and standards of conduct. This code also helps guide ethical decision making and practice.

There are eight key points within the code of ethics these are; 1. Nurses value quality nursing care for all people. 2. Nurses value respect and kindness for self and others. 3. Nurses value the diversity of people. 4. Nurses value access to quality nursing and health care for all people. 5. Nurses value informed decision making. 6. Nurses value a culture of safety in nursing and health care. 7. Nurses value ethical management of information. 8. Nurses value a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable environment promoting health and wellbeing. (ANMC, 2005)

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) revised the English language requirements in August 2010 which have been published on the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's website. Nursing and Midwifery

Board of Australia are responsible for all Nursing applications in Australia, and have made Continuing Professional Development mandatory.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is essential for professionals to maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop their personal qualities required for the ever-changing field of health care.

Continuing Professional Development is important for the enhancement of skills both professionally and personally. This is a career long process and it is essential as the resources grow so must the professionals' knowledge.

Continuing Professional Development is a design that helps promote self-learning and address any inadequacies associated with previous learning.

(Justin Konkol, n. d) The purpose of Continuing Professional Development is extensive but some of the main reasons are to maintain knowledge and skills provide evidence of competency, maintain competency and adequacy.

Although a boundary on how competency and Continuing Professional Development are reviewed could come down to an individuals value judgements or expert opinion, but who is to say who is right and who is wrong? There is also an opportunity for independent assessment.

In the past it has been a requirement of health care professionals to continue education; Continuing Professional Development is an improved replacement structure of continuation of education (CE).

Competence and Continuing Professional Development are very closely linked, as you need to Continue Professional Development to continue competence. It is important that a health care professional is kept up to date in order to maintain competency. Continuing Professional Development is a

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key indicator of continuing competence within a practice. Competence is the ability to perform duties accurately, make correct judgments, and interact appropriately with patients and colleagues. Professional competence is characterized by good problem-solving and decision-making abilities, a strong knowledge base, and the ability to apply knowledge and experience to diverse patient care situations. (Health-Syst Pharm, 2001)

“ CPD ensures that professions remain up to date in a changing world and that the reputation of the profession is enhanced, encouraging individuals to aspire to improve performance and ensure they are committed to learning and it is an integral part of their work.” (Whittaker, 1992). This is a prime example of a professional expert explaining why continuing professional development is important. The world can not be stopped from changing, and our professionals must keep up with the standards in order to continue competency.

Continuing Professional Development is broken up into five main principles. These include Reflecting on current skills and knowledge and identifying personal and organizational areas that may need improvement within a practice. Individually the professional should devise a personal plan for future strategies that will help in the identified learning and developmental needs. Broken down into five simple steps Continuing Professional Development is best achieved by: Step one: Identifying current competencies. Step two: Determine the desired and the current levels of performance. Step three: Identify the learning and development needs. Step four: Plan and action, in other words, fill the gaps. Step five: Evaluate and demonstrate.

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There are many barriers that stop professionals from carrying out Continuation Professional Development. Time, cost, and access are the most frequent of these barriers. Finding time between work life and home life is confronting enough, let alone balancing another aspect of furthering education. Professionals with poor time-management skills will find time as the biggest barrier. The cost of perusing Continuing Professional Development can be a costly one not only for an individual but also an organisation. For smaller profit organisations they may not have the funds to support an individual professional to further their education and therefore the cost falls back onto the individual. Also people from smaller districts may not have the facilities or the facilitators required to fulfil this continuation of learning forcing them to travel a distance which again brings in factors such as time and costs.

There are also personal factors that become barriers such as differences in career stage, preferred learning style and individual ambition. For a professional that is high up in the health care hierarchy they may feel that there is nothing left for them to expand on and don't see the reasoning behind them further their education. Also every individual has a different way they prefer to learn. Unfortunately when in a learning setting not all of these approaches can be facilitated for. For someone who is comfortable in their current position, participating in Continuing Professional Development may not be ideal for them, where as for a professional that is highly ambitious participating in Continuing Professional Development is absolutely ideal for them. Barriers for Continuing Professional Development come down to the professional individual and their drive and desire to continue their

learning. As Continuing Professional Development is very much a self-learning process, there is a distinct difference in those who are competent and participate in Continuing their Professional Development and those whose competency slips when furthering their education is not perused.

In conclusion, in order to achieve continuous competence professionals need to engage in Continuing Professional Development. This is crucial for a successful health care system and a successful practice. As research continues to grow so must the professionals' knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviours. Rules and ideas continue to change and evolve and as a health care professional continuing professional development help the professional to evolve with them. The world will always continue to expand, change and evolve around us and our health care professionals must expand, change and evolve with it.