

Quantity versus quality: are hours-based approaches to Continuing Professional Development fit for purpose?

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Background

Globally dental professionals are required to undertake continuing professional development (CPD).

In the UK, CPD requirements set by the General Dental Council (GDC) specify numbers of verifiable hours (according to registered dental title) to be completed in a given time period.

| CPD Role | Min. hours of verifiable CPD per cycle |
|--|--|
| Dentist | 100 |
| Dental Nurse or Dental Technician | 50 |
| Other DCP (dental therapist, dental hygienist, orthodontic therapist, or clinical dental technician) | 75 |

Aims & Objectives

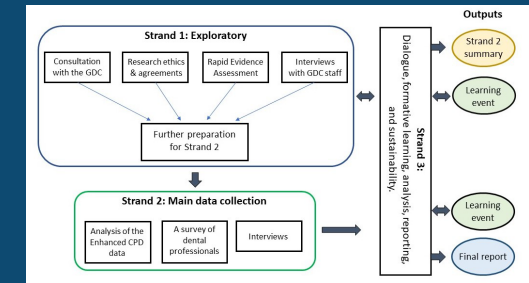
To explore the views of dental professionals on the appropriateness of an hours-based approach to CPD.

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The views and opinions expressed in the presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the GDC.



Methods



This presentation draws on data from an online survey (n=2817) and one-to-one interviews (n=33).

Results

Two broad approaches to CPD:

Instrumental – those who regard CPD as a tick-box exercise to remain on the register and thus do their job

“It engenders a mercenary attitude to CPD – if there is no certificate or its hard / marginal to prove then don’t bother.” (Dentist, Survey)

Developmental – those driven by personal desire to keep up-to-date and improve their practice.

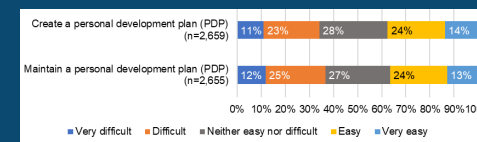
“I do not view CPD as something that has to be done to maintain my registration. I engage in CPD because after 33 years I still love my job and want to continue to excel at it”. (Dentist, Survey)

Discussion

“Within dentists there’s probably about two main groups, one group that has no problem doing CPD, does a lot of it anyway and is hitting the hours without any problem at all. Then you’ve got another group who really aren’t interested and will do whatever they can to get points. Usually by going on, you know, pretty lousy online or all-day core courses that aren’t really teaching anything, simply so that you’ve got a certificate at the end of it.” (Dentist, Interview)

The developmental approach requires reflection on learning needs. However, some survey respondents reported difficulties both in creating and maintaining a personal development plan (PDP).

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Conclusions

An hours-based approach may serve to exacerbate the instrumental attitude to CPD so is not fit for purpose.

An outcome-based approach that focuses on tailored learning and impact on practice would support the developmental perspective. This would put greater focus on reflection on learning experiences and changes to professional practice rather than counting hours.

To support a developmental approach registrants and dental students need to be reflective practitioners and skilled in development planning.

References

Bullock, A., Barnes, E., Jones, R., Bartlett, S. and Russ, E. 2023. [Evaluating enhanced Continuing Professional Development: Final Report](#). Project Report. [Online]. General Dental Council.