

Development of a Personal Learning Plan

Introduction

'In Australia and New Zealand, the community expects that registered medical practitioners will maintain, develop, update and enhance their knowledge, skills and performance so that they are equipped to deliver safe and appropriate care throughout their working lives. The CPD phase of medical education is mainly self-directed and involves practice-based learning activities rather than supervised training. The education provider therefore requires regular participation in a range of activities to meet self-assessed learning needs based on the intended scopes of practice of specialists, and where possible on practice data'.

Reference: Standards for Assessment and Accreditation of Specialist Medical Programs and Professional Development Programs by the Australian Medical Council 2015, p. 26.

The RCPA offers a mechanism by which participants may engage in a cycle of planning and self-evaluation of learning goals and achievements in relation to their scope of practice. The following guideline explains how a personal learning plan may be used for this purpose.

Principles

- A learning plan can help you to identify:
 - What you need to learn/achieve and why
 - How and when you intend to learn/achieve it
 - How you will know when you have learned/achieved it
 - How you can apply and build upon what you have learned
- There is no set formula for developing a learning plan. Individual needs and learning contexts will call for distinct forms of documentation. The RCPA respects and encourages autonomy of specialists in seeking ways to identify and meet learning and professional development needs.
- Setting goals and gathering peer support are essential ingredients
 - A mentor or co-learner may be helpful to support development and implementation of the plan
 - A manager or peer may be helpful to appraise your level of success with the plan and identify further development needs

CPDP recognition

- Development of a learning plan is recognised as a Category B (Personal Study) activity.
- Peer review of progress or outcome of a learning plan is recognised as a Category C (Quality Activities) item.

Identifying learning and professional development needs

- Define your domains of practice, e.g. as set out in the RCPA curriculum handbooks:
 - Discipline-specific areas of expertise including knowledge of basic science and practical clinical application
 - Management of safety, quality, people, resources, information and legal requirements
 - Scholarly activities including research, teaching and learning skills
 - Professional qualities including communication, collaboration, leadership, professionalism and ethics
- Consider feedback from others, e.g. direct personal feedback on your work or 360-degree feedback
- Review your IQA and EQA activities
- Reflect on situations or questions that you were not well-prepared to handle. It may be helpful to keep a diary of knowledge gaps as you encounter them.
- Consider any errors or complaints and how they could be prevented in future
- Identify emerging areas of practice highlighted at conferences or in literature or medical news
- Identify any new practical skills or testing procedures that you need to carry out or supervise
- Consider how you could enhance your current practice or roles to improve patient outcomes
- Consider what may be needed to advance your career
- Remember to include measures to enhance your personal wellbeing and resilience

Examples of activities that may help you to achieve your goals and improve your practice:

- Any activities that are part of the RCPA CPDP
- Working with a mentor
- Observing others and asking questions
- Working with a colleague at a double-header microscope
- Performing a practical skill under supervision
- Seeking/accepting feedback from others
- Keeping a personal learning journal or log of interesting cases
- Seeking solutions for practical problems
- Reviewing your achievements
- Document outcomes and evidence
- Document achievements and identify opportunities for maintenance and further quality improvement
- Self-evaluation may be helpful, but getting honest appraisal from a peer or senior colleague is much more effective. Try to set aside a specific time for this