

A study of current Continuous Medical Education / Continuous Professional Development programmes for health care staff with special focus on Medical officers and recommendation for improvement

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Abstract- Continuing Medical Education (CME) is an educational activity which helps to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, professional performance and relationships that help physician to provide services for patients, whereas Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refers to the education following completion of formal training, which will help to maintain, develop or increase knowledge, technical skills and standards, resulting in better healthcare. Therefore CME and CPD go hand in hand. This qualitative study was performed with Key Informant interviews and focus group discussions to study of current Continuous Medical Education / Continuous Professional Development programmes for health care staff with special focus on Medical officers and recommendation for improvement. Main findings were, there was no firm CPD frame work in the health sector, but some CPD programmes were performed in various professional colleges. It was also found that, there was no proper training need analysis and performing CME / CPD programmes based on the training need analysis. With the view of improving the professional development it was recommended to perform training need analysis, prepare CPD programmes based on the training needs and to establish national level CPD framework.

Index Terms- Continuous Medical Education / Continuous Medical Development, Health Sector, Doctors

I. INTRODUCTION

Continuing Medical Education (CME) is an educational activity which helps to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, professional performance and relationships that help physician to provide services for patients [1].

CME allows health care providers to [2]:

- Improve skills for patient care
- Stay updated with latest developments within their speciality
- Help health care professionals face day to day real-world challenges
- Help for professional growth leading towards advance career status
- Meet licensing / certification requirements

- Learn effective medical team management skills
- Earn membership in professional organizations

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refers to the education following completion of formal training, which will help to maintain, develop or increase knowledge, technical skills and standards, resulting in better healthcare. CPD is broad which include not only acquiring new knowledge or skills as a doctor but also encompass one's personal development [3]. Studies have demonstrated that there is no designated method of CPD [4].

CME concentrates on professionals keeping them up to date and improving specialist knowledge by education and training in areas determined by experts. Professionals play a vital role in CPD to define the knowledge which they see as relevant to their own professional needs. Learning takes place not only at individual level, but also at the organizational level [5]. The amount of biomedical knowledge available doubles every 20 years [6]. A doctor's practice could become rapidly outdated. Because patients needs, doctors practice keep changing with time, knowledge should be up to date to engage in good medical care [7].

CPD is helpful to maintain, develop or increase knowledge, technical skills, problem solving and professional performing standards with the aim of providing better healthcare services [8]. Learning via CPD is seen as essential for effective practice and for individual professional development, whether or not it results in career progression [4].

A comparative analysis done by Garattini L et.al 2010 [9] showed CME is formally compulsory in Austria, France, Italy and UK. Belgium and Norway are the two countries that offer financial incentives to enhance CME participation. Formal accreditation is required by the providers of CME activities in Austria, France and Italy, while in the other three countries accreditation is focused on activities. Private sponsorship is allowed in all countries but Norway, within certain limits [9].

The College of General Practitioners Sri Lanka (CGPSL) has conducted programmes for CME and CPD for general / family practitioners during the past three decades. The main CME/CPD activity of the College has been the annual academic session which is a valuable forum for education and presentation of research

work [10]. CME / CPD programmes mainly conducted by Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) and other colleges.

II. METHODOLOGY

Objective of the study was to identify, current Continuous Medical Education programmes for Medical officers and recommendation for improvement. Study was done in Sri Lanka in relation to public health sector. Methods used in the study were Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, literature review, reviewing secondary data. Key Informant Interviews done with the key officials in the health sector and Focus Group Discussions with the medical officers.

III. RESULTS

There were no CPD framework in Sri Lanka and the Continuous Medical Education & Continuous Professional Development programmes were not regularly conducted and streamlined with limited coverage without covering the entire country. Majority of the professional colleges were not uniformly involved in the CME & CPD programmes. It was observed that poor participation of Medical Professionals for CME and CPD activities. There were no mandatory requirements participating in the CME & CPD programmes in the current system. Many colleges performed CME / CPD programmes individually linking with their annual academic sessions. But these programmes were focused for their specialty. When it comes to areas in CME & CPD some areas in the medical profession are not much covered, whereas certain areas are well covered from CME & CPD programmes (e.g. Cardio Respiratory Resuscitation programmes). There was no training need analysis or national training programme for each category of staff in the health sector depending on the training need analysis. It was also found that there were no accreditations or evaluations processes for these CPD programmes carried out.

IV. DISCUSSION

Continuous Medical Education / Continuous Professional Development, is important to medical professional to keep their knowledge and skills up to date in this changing world and also it observed that, currently there are many transitions taking place in the country, namely demographic, technological, economical transitions etc. Since there is no mandatory requirement for CME / CPD programmes, it is essential to mandate these programmes with the view of improving their knowledge and skills in their professional carrier. These CME / CPD programmes should give opportunity to earn CPD points. These CPD points should link with for various evaluation e.g. transfers, promotions scholarships etc. Country should have a National CPD frame work in each sector, especially in the health sector.

V. CONCLUSION

CPD programmes are lacking in the Health system in Sri Lanka, but there are few CPD programmes carried out by

professional colleges and Sri Lanka Medical Association. Although these programmes are conducted, it is not done in an organized manner. There have been many attempts to develop CPD frame work in Sri Lanka but the effort was not successful. In this study there were gaps found in CPD and CME programmes in Sri Lankan health system. Based on this study it can be recommended following recommendations to a country to streamline CPD / CME programmes for professional development and ultimately aiming the improvement of health system.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a national level CPD frame work for a country.
2. Conduct a national Training needs analysis for each category.
3. Establish a national CPD programmes for each category of staffs in the health sector depending on training need analysis.
4. Establish a human resource database and incorporate CPD programmes points gained by individuals to this human resource database for future usage.
5. A policy decision in mandating CME / CPD programmes in professionals carrier.
6. Usage of CPD points for evaluation (annual increment, transfers etc.) and awarding rewards for professionals (promotions, scholarships etc.).

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