Continuing professional development in the state of Qatar: Needs, available resources and compliance of the dental professionals

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Abstract: The paper presents the results of a perceived Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs assessment conducted prior to the launch of Qatar National Continuing Medical Education (CME)/Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program which mandated the participation of all healthcare practitioners in CPD activities. The results of the survey showed higher preference of group-learning activities which (together with other factors) represented a challenge for the newly developed national system. Such challenge was mitigated by Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners-Accreditation Department (QCHP-AD) using several support strategies including close monitoring of Dentists participation in the National CPD program, stakeholder collaboration, healthcare practitioners training and promoting the concept of interprofessional education, the later showed to be highly effective for ensuring availability of CPD activities to dentists and achieving high rate of compliance with the national CPD credit requirements.

Keywords: CPD; dental professionals; compliance; interprofessional education

1. Introduction

CPD of healthcare practitioners is a key component to excellence and quality of healthcare[1]. Starting from March 7 2016, Qatar launched its National CME/CPD program and mandated the participation in this program for all healthcare practitioners, including dentists, in order to be able to renew their license of practice. Ensuring the availability and quality of CPD activities targeting dentists is essential to ensure their compliance with the national CPD credit requirements and, more importantly, their proper professional development. Proper CPD needs assessment would ensure better quality of CPD activities and hence would improve the quality of CPD, competence and performance of healthcare practitioners and subsequently the quality of healthcare services provided and patient outcomes in the state of Qatar[2].

2. Methods

A survey questionnaire to assess the perceived needs of dentists was developed by Qatar’s National Oral Health Committee (as one of the deliverables and shrines of the National Oral Health Strategy) in collaboration with Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners-Accreditation Department (QCHP-AD), the regulator of accreditation and participation in CPD activities in the state of Qatar. The survey questionnaire was electronically distributed to 417 dentists working in different sectors of the healthcare system (Governmental and private) in Qatar. Responses were received over 1 month (December 15, 2015–January 15, 2016), collected and analyzed.

In addition, The number of accredited CPD activities targeting dentists and the rates of dentists’ compliance with the CPD Credit requirements of the National CPD program were monitored during the 1st year of the program implementation (March 7, 2016–March 7, 2017). The data was collected from QCHP-AD’s online portal “E-portfolio”, analyzed and presented in this research.

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3. Results & Discussion

Analysis of the results of perceived needs assessment survey (Figure 1–3) shows that most of dentists prefer to attend group learning CPD activities especially hands-on workshops (80%). Face-to-face (49.2%) and blended (44.4%) formats were preferred over online (6.4%) format. General practice dentistry (58.7%), endodontics (54.4%) and restorative dentistry (53.5%) were perceived by surveyed dentists as the most needed disciplines to be addresses in CPD activities.
Taking in consideration that dentists prefer group-learning activities over self-directed learning and assessment activities; dentists (and all other healthcare practitioners licensed to work in Qatar) are mandated to gain 40 credit hours from group-learning activities every 2 years to renew their license[1], and the lack of National dental academic institutions and faculty, the newly developed National CPD system was expected to face a challenge with dentists. Therefore, QCHP-AD planned for several support strategies to ensure dentists’ compliance with the National system.
requirements. Those strategies included:

- Coordination with relevant stakeholders and accredited CPD providers to develop and provide specialized accredited CPD resources sufficient for dentists in the country. Results of Dentists’ needs assessment were shared with CPD providers for better educational planning.
- Recognition of CPD activities attended outside Qatar and accredited by reputed international accreditation bodies identified and enlisted by QCHP-AD.
- Promoting the concept of interprofessional education as a tool to improve team-based practices and coordination and for providing educational opportunities for those who might lack the availability of specialized CPD resources.
- Providing educational and training sessions for dentists, among other healthcare professions, on the requirements and components of CPD program.
- Close monitoring of the availability and percentage compliance of dentists to the National CPD credit requirements.

As can be noticed from Figure 4 (showing Dentists’ compliance with CPD credit requirements compared to that of other healthcare professions) the percentage compliance of dentists (91.5%) was the second highest compliance rate (only 0.05% lower than pharmacists). This is in line with availability of CPD activities targeting dentists (Table 1) which represents, also, the second highest rate (104 activity per 1000 dentist) after pharmacists.

It can be also noticed from the results (Table 1) that interprofessional education represented one of the main factors of achieving high rate of accredited CPD activities availability and practitioners’ compliance with the National CPD requirements. A fact that is most evident for dentists where 92% of their CPD activities were interprofessional.

4. Conclusion

Prior to the launch of the National CPD system, Dentists were surveyed for their perceived CPD needs. The survey results were analyzed and showed that dentists prefer face-to-face and blended group learning activities in certain disciplines (themes). The needs assessment results were communicated to CPD providers in the country. Meanwhile, QCHP-AD followed several support strategies to ensure availability of CPD activities and high level of dentists’ compliance with the National CPD requirements. One of such strategies was to closely monitor the availability of CPD activities and percentage compliance. Monitoring showed high level of compliance to the CPD requirements that can be linked to high availability of CPD activities targeting dentists. Such availability can be largely attributed to one other support strategy followed by QCHP-AD which is the promotion of interprofessional education concept.

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References