

CPD Policy Working Party response to outcomes-based CPD consultation

Introduction

- 1) This short report presents the headline findings from the consultation with the profession on proposals for an outcomes-based CPD system and outlines the next steps that the RCVS plans to take.
- 2) The six-week consultation with the professions started in June 2016; veterinary surgeons and nurses were asked for their opinion about the proposal by completing an online survey.
- 3) Overall, 3,357 people completed the questionnaire and responses were also received from the Association of Veterinary Students, AVI, BCVA, BSAVA, BVA, BVU, Cat's Protection, Dog's Trust and SPVS. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation: your feedback and candid views are very much appreciated and have been taken into account in the steps that are now planned.

Headline Findings

- 4) Looking at the findings overall, there are a few points worth highlighting as follows:
 - a) There were no major differences in the results between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses.
 - b) A small majority of the respondents agreed with each of the proposed changes to the CPD requirement
 - c) It would appear that parts of the professions are already following the CPD cycle but not recording each step of it. There are many positive comments about how the proposal will make a positive change for vets/vet nurses in the future, especially if the recording process is easy and not too time consuming.

Responses to the CPD Cycle

- 5) More than 80% of respondents agreed with the do and record parts of the CPD cycle.
- 6) Overall 56% agreed with the planning component of the CPD cycle, while 33% disagreed. Part of the objection to planning CPD was that not all CPD can or should be planned as part of a formal development plan.

- 7) The component of the CPD cycle that received the least support was reflection. Overall 45% agreed that it should be included within the cycle and 35% disagreed.

Responses to the CPD Model

- 8) Overall more than 50% of respondents agreed with the proposed CPD model, although between 27-30 % neither agreed nor disagreed with the different components of the CPD model.
- 9) The comments indicated that the model had not been well understood by all respondents. It was intended to encourage a variety of CPD activities, but many respondents thought that they would have to undertake CPD in each of the three domains even if it was not relevant to them. Others could not see specific examples relevant to them and wanted to add further CPD activities to the model.

Key Concerns

- 10) There were many positive comments about the CPD proposal, for example:
- a) *"I think this will make it much easier to focus efforts, especially when a new graduate in practice."*
 - b) *"The inclusion of a reflection phase in the process is brilliant! That's what's going to make a difference in the development of skills and competences."*
 - c) *"I think it will be difficult and there will be a lot of resistance initially, but I do think that despite not really feeling like doing it myself, it will make better vets in the future. "*
 - d) *"I will HATE having to prove to you that I reflect on my CPD, but so many vets I know get certificates from a congress for 20+ hours and learn sod all, I think you must enforce this. I don't think I should have to send a plan of why I want to do something though. But the rest is good, although I doubt it will be popular..."*
- 11) However, the main concerns expressed in the consultation comments were that it would take up additional time and vets/vet nurses would be required to undertake unnecessary paperwork in order to comply with the proposed CPD requirement.
- 12) Many veterinary surgeons and nurses were particularly worried about additional time spent planning and reflecting; they felt that completing and recording CPD already took up part of their spare time and the new requirement would make it more difficult to maintain a good work/life balance. Many also expressed concerns that it would add stress or pressure to already busy and overworked professionals. A few examples of comments regarding time pressures are:

- a) *"I feel that by the time you plan, do, record and reflect your cpd, the 105 hours of recorded cpd would be in reality at least three times that number of hours of time taken up. I feel this is unnecessary and adding stress to an already pressure filled job."*
 - b) *"The way I chose my cpds now is similar to outcome base system. I also record my cpds on the rcvs website. I am not so keen on formulating written plan of the cpd and writing reflections. I think I am busy enough and it won't bring any extra value to my work."*
 - c) *"Already have enough to do, work long hours, on call, no lunch breaks etc, having to formally plan and write about planning CPD, reflecting on it etc just seems like it will take up more of my very limited free time, making my already poor work life balance even worse. Know I will not be given time at work to complete these tasks, so just even more to do in my supposed free time. "*
- 13) The other main concern was that the new proposal would involve extra paperwork by being too bureaucratic: the phrase 'a tick box exercise' is used repeatedly. Many veterinary surgeons and nurses said that they were already reflecting either by just thinking through what they gained from the training/learning or by sharing it with colleagues after the event, but they did not see the need to record it. A flavour of the comments about excess paperwork are:
- a) *"Personally I find reflecting on CPD an onerous activity and don't gain from it as it generally appears to be a tick box exercise"*
 - b) *"The additional steps seem wholly unnecessary. Making vets write down what they learnt and what difference it will make smacks of a tick box exercise. I can't think of a single situation where it would help me longer term to sit and write cliches like 'During this CPD I learnt how to tackle X, Y, Z, I feel that I can apply this in my daily work...etc etc'. "*
 - c) *"Getting veterinary professionals to consider what benefit proposed CPD will bring is clearly worthwhile but making all this something that has to be debated and wordily recorded is yet another addition to the lake of bureaucracy we find ourselves trying to swim"*
 - d) *"I believe the current system is working well for me and the proposed changes appear to represent more time spent on general bureaucracy and less actual learning. I believe it would increase the stress of gaining cpd and reduce the benefits from it. "*

Next steps

- 14) It is clear from the outcomes of the consultation that the proposals raised a number of concerns within the professions and also that they were not well understood. The RCVS needs to address the concerns that have been raised and to communicate more clearly both the intentions behind what is proposed and the benefits to the profession of pursuing an outcomes-based system.

- 15) In particular, the definition of and expectations around 'reflection' need to be clarified and clearly communicated: it had never been the intention to ask veterinary surgeons and nurses to produce lengthy reflective documents. In order to make this part of the cycle clearer an alternative term such as 'review' or 'evaluation' will be added. Similarly, further explanation is needed on expectations around the use of the model and for planning: it is accepted (and was actually acknowledged within the consultation document) that not all CPD can or should be planned.
- 16) In order to encourage evidenced reflection/evaluation, vets and vet nurses will be able to count the actual time taken for reflection as part of CPD, provided it is properly documented. It is important to emphasise that reflection/review and evaluation forms an important and legitimate part of the learning process.
- 17) RCVS feels that the best way forward is to set up a pilot process. This will involve the recruitment of a group of volunteers to help pilot the proposals, test out approaches to planning and reflection/evaluation to see what works best and further refine the model and help the RCVS to develop an IT system that will make CPD as easy as possible to record. Ideally this group will include vets and nurses that do not normally engage with the College and that would not instinctively be in favour of the proposals.
- 18) As part of the pilot process, guidance can be developed and case studies can be completed to clarify expectations and inform the professions about the benefits and ease of the new system.
- 19) Finally, the consultation responses indicated a number of common misunderstandings both with the current CPD requirement and the proposed changes. We have addressed some of these in Annex 1.
- 20) If you would like to be part of the CPD pilot or would like any further information about it please contact cpd@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0701.

RCVS CPD Policy Working Party
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What can I count as CPD?

You can count any learning or development activity that you feel is relevant to you as a professional person towards your CPD. It does not have to be clinically related or formal learning such as attending courses. The judgement of what should count as CPD will vary for each individual, depending on your job role, your circumstances and your career aspirations. It is therefore up to you to decide how best to fulfil your own learning needs, but you do need to record and document your CPD properly.

Do I have to plan for all the CPD activities that I wish to attend over the next year?

No, the plan should be a working document that can be produced at any time of the year, edited and added to rather than a strict plan produced at the beginning of the year that cannot be amended. Not every activity has to be included in the plan; spontaneous and unplanned CPD can still be counted towards your CPD. Activities that did not feature within the original plan may result in very useful learning and may trigger other areas that can be added to the learning plan - the process should be iterative and dynamic.

What is reflection?

Reflection means to think about your practice and deciding if you want to change the way you do things. In terms of reflecting on your CPD, you do not need to produce a reflective essay, it is a chance for you to think about what you learnt, if your learning will change your practice in any way and if you need to take any further steps or do any further research in this area.

Is there any evidence about the benefits of reflection?

There is evidence that CPD activities which are interactive, encourage reflection on practice, provide opportunities to practice skills, involve multiple exposures, help practitioners identify between current performance and a standard, and are focused on outcomes, are the most effective at improving practice and patient health outcomes. *We will shortly publish a literature review of CPD outcomes with open access in the Vet Times.*

How can I volunteer to be part of the CPD pilot?

If you would like to be part of the CPD pilot or would like any further information about it please contact cpd@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0701.

It will be your opportunity to be part of further developing the model and the IT system and helping us to make sure that it is easy to understand and to work with for people across the profession. You will receive help and support during the first year and also be invited to attend an introductory CPD meeting at the RCVS.