Continuing Professional Development Q&As

Question: Why is the CPSO requiring physicians to pay money to the CFPC or RCPSC? The CPSO should keep track of our CPD credits.

Answer: In 2009, the Regulated Health Professions Act, the legislation that sets out the requirements of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, made changes to the elements of the Quality Assurance Program. Under section 80.1 of the Health Professions Procedural Code, it is now a requirement for the program to include:

a) continuing education or professional development designed to,
   i) promote continuing competence and continuing quality improvement among members
   ii) address changes in practice environments, and
   iii) incorporate standards of practice, advances in technology, changes made to entry to practice competencies and other relevant issues in the discretion of the Council;

b) self, peer and practice assessments; and

c) a mechanism for the College to monitor members’ participation in, and compliance with, the quality assurance program.

In order to ensure the QA regulation was consistent with these new requirements, the membership was provided an opportunity to give the College feedback about proposed amendments to the QA regulation. These amendments included the requirement for members to participate in continuing professional development (CPD) in order to satisfy section 80.1(a) and (c).

We heard quite clearly from the membership that it did not want the College to duplicate the activities that already existed at the national level through the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). These national educational bodies have spent considerable effort over the years to develop programs of CPD that take into consideration the different types of activities available to physicians, and the relative value of these types of activities in effecting change in practice. Council agreed with the membership and as a result, made it a requirement through the QA regulation for physicians to meet the CPD requirements of one of these two national bodies and report their activities to one of these two organizations. The regulation does allow the opportunity for other organizations with robust CPD programs to make an application to be accepted as an alternative to the CFPC and RCPSC. To date, only one application has made it through the process and been accepted, and that was the application by the General Practice Psychotherapy Association (GPPA).

The College did not consider setting up its own program of CPD and CPD tracking. The cost to establish such a program would have been considerable, and ultimately borne by the membership. Given that the majority of physicians in Ontario already belonged to the CFPC or RCPSC, the membership would not have supported the development of a duplicate effort (and expense) by the College.
**Question:** Do surgical assistants (or physicians doing administrative medicine) have to comply with the regulation?

**Answer:** It is now a regulatory requirement for all members to engage in CPD through the CFPC, RCPSC or General Practice Psychotherapy Association (GPPA) and, in most cases, for those physicians who are not tracking their CPD through one of those organizations the consequence will likely be a QA assessment.

As you may be aware, the Quality Assurance Committee does not currently assess Surgical Assisting/Admin medicine practices. Chart review is the foundation for most College assessments and this scope of practice does not involve the maintenance of clinical records. Currently, then, if a physician’s practice is exclusively restricted to surgical assisting/admin medicine and the physician is not meeting the CPD requirements as outlined in the regulation, and if that physician is referred to the QAC as a result, it is likely that upon review the QAC will direct no further action. However, unless the physician has completely retired from practice, there are aspects to any physician’s practice that are assessable, particularly with respect to communication and collaboration skills. These are often assessed using multi-source feedback. While the Committee is not currently using multi-source feedback as a stand-alone assessment tool, it may consider doing so in the future and if this is the case, a QA assessment could be in the form of colleague/co-worker questionnaires or interviews.

**Question:** I just joined one of the national organizations. How do I respond to the question on annual renewal, as I haven’t yet started tracking my CPD?

**Answer:** The questions on the annual renewal come straight from the QA regulation, which requires physicians to 1) participate in a program of CPD that meets the requirements for CPD set by the RCPSC or CFPC and 2) provide proof of participation acceptable to the CPSO.

If a physician has joined one of the 3 organizations only recently, s/he can still answer yes to both questions as by joining, s/he is now starting to fulfill the CPD requirements, and will now be reporting their participation through one of the organizations.

**Question:** My CPD is tracked by an organization outside of Ontario. Is this acceptable?

**Answer:** The RCPSC completed an extensive review of international CPD systems. The RCPSC approved approximately 60 of these systems as substantively equivalent with the MOC (Maintenance of Certification) Program in Canada, including all of the re-certification programs of the 24 America boards. All of these programs include what the RCPSC requires for CPD. However, physicians involved in these programs need to report through the RCPSC; physicians cannot report direct to the CPSO.

**Question:** My practice is very unique and I don’t believe the CPD organizations will have activities that are relevant to me. Do I still have to join?

**Answer:** The three recognized CPD organizations do not offer CPD activities; they set requirements for the types and number of activities over a one year and 5 year period and they track completion of those activities. It is up to the physician to identify CPD that is relevant to his/her practice and complete a sufficient number of those activities. Please refer to the websites of these organizations for more detailed information.