

Royal College's new tools to support doctors in lifelong learning

Mobile learning strategies a new focus

Recently, we spoke to Dr. Craig Campbell, Executive Director, Office of Professional Affairs of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College) about how members can get the most from their continuing professional development. Below he shares the Royal College's strategies and the tools developed to support physicians in lifelong learning.

How does the Royal College support physicians in their continuing professional development?

The Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program places each physician at the centre of his/her own professional development. Physicians have the responsibility to develop a continuing professional development (CPD) plan that is reflective of and relevant to their scope of practice and identified learning needs.

We have several mechanisms in place to support physicians to do so. Most notably, MAINPORT – our ePortfolio, which was recently re-designed – supports physicians to plan CPD to identify learning goals they intend to pursue throughout the coming year, creates plans to achieve those goals, selects multiple learning strategies and tracks their progress and evaluates outcomes. Physicians can also record and reflect on the outcomes from completing multiple CPD activities.

Having the skills that allows one to identify his or her learning needs is fundamental. We have established a lifelong learning curriculum to assist physicians to reflect on and evaluate their learning for practice. By considering key questions, physicians can better identify learning needs. Such questions could include “What are my current professional roles and responsibilities?”, “How do I raise and answer questions in my practice?”, “How can I assess myself in practice?”, “How will I scan my practice and environment to identify new developments that I can apply to my practice?” and, “What areas of my practice should I assess?”



What was the impetus behind the re-design of MAINPORT?

Fellows recommended multiple changes to MAINPORT to transform it from a place where physicians document their learning activities to a multi-faceted ePortfolio – where physicians can document and reflect on learning activities, plan and manage projects in development, access web resources, online journals and access self-assessment programs to assess their knowledge at any point in time. One of the most important features of MAINPORT was the ability for users to start a learning activity (for example, a personal learning project), save the file, and return to it at a future date to review, update, edit or complete. Physicians can equally link learning activities to specific learning goals, but also to one or more CanMEDS Roles.

As an organization, we recognize the opportunities afforded by various technologies to support physicians' lifelong learning. And, the literature suggests that we are moving away from e-learning to mobile learning. So, most recently, we incorporated a mobile learning strategy by developing an app for Android and Blackberry users in June 2011 and an iPhone/iPad app in September 2012. »»

What strategies and tools are in place to support practice-based opportunities for reflection?

Under the Self-learning section of the MOC framework, physicians can leverage multiple learning activities to meet identified practice needs. In addition to formal courses, examples of planned learning activities include personal learning projects and traineeships. The Royal College recently expanded the credit system for these last two examples from one to two credits per hour in recognition of the importance of learning activities that reflect the real perceived needs of physicians

in practice, requiring them to stop and seek solutions and apply new knowledge and skills in practice.

In addition, our mobile tools support real-time learning by enabling physicians to link to MAINPORT and record learning ideas (from a patient encounter), reflect in real-time on their practice, record their reflections from attending rounds or conferences and save searches directly into the system. Physicians can use MAINPORT to enter new learning activities, review

completed and incomplete activities and make changes as needed at any time.

What is the Royal College’s vision for CPD over the next five years?

We are committed to continually enhancing the MOC Program to support physicians to acquire and utilize lifelong learning skills, identify their learning needs, develop a knowledge management strategy and assess their competence and performance in practice, towards

the ultimate goal of improving physician performance and patient health outcomes. With these goals in mind, there are two strategic initiatives we are currently pursuing that are particularly significant.

We believe that lifelong learning strategies are relevant across the continuum of medical education. To that end, we are planning to enhance and expand our current e-Portfolio to support learning and assessment throughout residency education to facilitate the acquisition of the competencies required to enter practice (including the skills of lifelong learning). Adapting MAINPORT to support learning in residency is a critical element to facilitating our transition to a competency-based medical education curriculum for all accredited residency training programs. MAINPORT will then

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enable physicians in practice to ‘progress in competence’ to attain expertise as part of competency-based CPD.

We also believe that assessment “for” learning must become a mandatory component of every physician’s learning strategy and lifelong learning plan. Assessment provides physicians with data and feedback that facilitates their ability to identify learning needs that, in turn, shape future learning activities and drive changes in behaviour. Without data and feedback, learning activities will be primarily focused on perceived needs.

Currently, we are encouraging physicians to integrate learning activities from all three sections of the MOC Program – Group learning, Self-learning, and Assessment. Over the next three to five years we will be launching a series of pilot projects to promote and enable physicians to engage in assessment (of knowledge, skills, competence or performance) including the ability to assess their own performance in practice. ^{MD}



Dr. Craig Campbell