Chapter 50

Nurses Using Social Media and Mobile Technology for Continuing Professional Development: Case Studies from Australia

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ABSTRACT

Continuing professional development is mandatory for all healthcare professionals in Australia. This chapter explores how the expectations of the regulatory and professional organisations of nursing and midwifery can be integrated within the profession by enrolled and registered nurses and midwives to meet the requirements and maintain their registrations. Using actual case studies as a basis, the chapter demonstrates how continuing professional development can be delivered as mobile or m-learning using social media or mobile technologies within this health profession. This chapter focuses on case studies from the Australian healthcare sector; however, it appears that similar issues arise in other countries and so the challenges and solutions described in the case studies can inform practice in other countries. It concludes by discussing the potential for continuing professional development m-learning into the future.

INTRODUCTION

Health professionals use a complex network of communication strategies to share important information within professions and multidisciplinary teams to improve patient or client outcomes and ensure high quality care is safely delivered. Building on the ubiquitous use of a variety of communication strategies can transform how continuing professional development (CPD) is delivered and accessed. By extending communication beyond the borders of the workplace it is
possible to improve access and enable a flexibility
that is unprecedented. Regulatory authorities have
provided direction and scope regarding what CPD
is and how it can be achieved.

Social media and the use of mobile technolo-
gies is the way of the future for CPD of health
professionals. CPD is mandatory for the 580,000
health professionals registered by the Australian
Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).
Annual evidence of compliance with the CPD
Standard for each health profession is required to
ensure competence is maintained. CPD is essential
for health professionals to be contemporary in their
knowledge and use best practice to ensure high
quality and safe care. Additionally, it provides
opportunities for practitioners to be exposed to
innovation within their field. There are other less
tangible benefits that include opportunities for
interdisciplinary collaboration and networking
with colleagues.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

In Australia, AHPRA regulates the practice of 15
health professional bodies, all members of which
are required to undertake CPD on an annual basis.
Each profession has its own standards, codes,
guidelines and policies that describe the require-
ments necessary to meet AHPRA requirements
for maintaining registration within the profession
(AHPRA, 2013).

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
(NMBA) is the professional body for nurses and
midwives and they define continuing professional
development or CPD as:

…the means by which members of the profession
maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge,
expertise and competence, and develop personal
and professional qualities required through their
professional lives. (NMBA, 2013, p1)

The NMBA CPD Registration Standard pre-
scribes that there must be documented evidence of
a minimum number of hours of CPD undertaken
each year or per triennium, in areas relevant to the
health professional (NMBA, 2013). It describes
acceptable CPD activities that may be undertaken.
CPD may include formal courses, conferences,
or online learning. Self-directed programs that
are planned and developed by individuals are ac-
ceptable provided they include reflection. Nurses
are required to keep written documentation and
verified evidence of compliance within a personal
portfolio (NMBA, 2013).

The NMBA CPD Registration Standard sup-
ports a range of activities that can be undertaken
as e-learning, using social media or mobile tech-
nologies (NMBA, 2013). The development of a
range of digital technologies and the growth of
social media ensure mobile technologies are well
positioned over time to replace traditional learning
and teaching models of CPD. Development and
delivery of CPD opportunities to health profes-
sionals is only limited by imagination about the
utility of social media and mobile technology as
a strategy for achieving CPD requirements.

CPD is embedded within each of the Australian
Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC, now
NMBA) competency domains (ANMC, 2006). It
is encapsulated in critical thinking and analysis
(Domain 3, Element 4) that states nurses will
“participate in ongoing professional development
of self and others” (ANMC, 2006: p4).

Health informatics and health technology
competency is now included in Standard 4
about program content of the Australian Nursing
and Midwifery Council (ANMAC) Standards
(ANMAC, 2012). ANMAC is the independent
accrediting authority responsible for monitoring
education providers and nursing and midwifery
programs of study leading to registration or
professional endorsement in Australia. There
are accreditation assessment standards that must
be attained to be authorised to develop curri-
cula and assess student performance (ANMAC,
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