

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Free Continuing Professional Development Resources for Low-Resource Settings



To the Editor:

We agree with Hudspeth et al regarding challenges for physicians undertaking continuing professional development (CPD) in low-resource settings and the need for development of CPD materials in a multilateral manner.¹ They envisage using the Internet to disseminate material suitable for each country via a range of approaches, including databases of CPD presentations and interactive modules for individual clinicians.

Ophthalmology has a proud history of promoting high standards of patient care through education. The International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO)² dates back to 1857 when 150 ophthalmologists from 24 countries convened in Brussels for the first World Ophthalmology Congress. Participants in the Congress founded the ICO in 1927 in Scheveningen, Holland. The ICO represents 141 national ophthalmic societies and subspecialty groups, many of which are in low-resource countries.

ICO educational materials are examples of multilateral CPD already developed for low-resource settings, disseminated via the Internet, available free of charge, and available in different languages. Among the many resources relevant to CPD are the following:

- Curriculum for CPD,³ intended to be used as a template and revised for each country.

The paper presents principles and elements of a structured CPD program and categorizes learning interventions according to their degree of interactivity. An educational event accreditation guideline to meet CPD standards is suggested. Personal learning plan and clinical audit templates are offered.

- Conferences for Ophthalmic Educators,² co-sponsored by supranational societies, to educate local educators; past presentations are available online.

- Online Center for Ophthalmic Educators,² with courses and tools for teachers.
- ICO Guide to Effective CPD/CME,⁴ an ebook (preview version) that aims to be a practical guide exploring the basic concepts and principles of CPD and the particular roles of participant, educator, scientific organization and regulator.
- Regional training centers in Cameroon, Beijing, China, Ibadan, Nigeria, and Ljubljana, Slovenia, which deliver teaching to regional ophthalmologists.
- Online clinical teaching material² such as international clinical guidelines.

As Hudspeth et al indicate, medical licensure in low-resource settings is usually permanent. The ICO also has resources for ophthalmic societies in low-resource settings implementing revalidation of medical licensure:

- Rubrics for assessment of surgical skills for a range of commonly performed ophthalmic procedures in low-resource settings⁵
- The ICO Guide to Effective CPD/CME (preview version)⁴
- ICO examinations, potentially able to be used in revalidation²

The ICO provides an excellent example of the multilateral development of CPD material, and, when coupled with other materials available on the Internet, provides free CPD material for ophthalmologists performing CPD in low-resource settings. In addition, the ICO can provide customized assistance for those societies aiming to develop their own structured CPD plan.

Heather G. Mack, PhD, FRANZCO, FRACS
University of Melbourne
Melbourne, Australia
Helena Prior Filipe, MD, MSc
Hospital of the Armed Forces
Lisbon, Portugal
Karl C. Golnik, MD
Director for Education
International Council of Ophthalmology
University of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Eye
Institute
Cincinnati, Ohio

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