



Continuing Professional Development and E-Learning

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The presentation will convey the philosophy, the strategic aim and the experiences of a Scottish Higher Education Institution in developing flexible, credit rated continuing professional development at a distance for Physiotherapists and other Allied Health Professionals throughout the UK and Europe. Purpose: The demand for Continuing Professional Development is changing rapidly and is on the increase. As governments, professional bodies and employers now require Physiotherapists to remain effective and proactive in delivering a high standards of patient care, there is a growing need for continued professional development to be more flexible and to fit in with the demands of professional life. Lecturers at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh have been working to develop flexible continual professional development to suit the needs of modern day physiotherapists and other healthcare practitioners. Continual professional development programmes to suit the needs of the individual learner are currently available and can be accessed any time, from any place and can be taken as small manageable units. Evidence of learning achievements will be rewarded with academic credit, providing an opportunity for learners to accumulate and transfer academic credit. Relevance: The report will present methods used to develop flexible, accredited continuing professional development programmes for Physiotherapists, at various education levels, of various lengths of study, delivered through a virtual learning environment using computer mediated conferencing. This form of continuing professional development has not only provided Physiotherapist with the opportunity to manage their own learning but has also become an ideal opportunity to include Physiotherapists in multiprofessional learning. Physiotherapists are provided the opportunity to learn with other healthcare professional becoming more aware of other healthcare practices. The report will also present the transferable skills achieved in using forms of learning other than traditional face-to-face methods which should be a consideration when providing continual professional development for the modern day Physiotherapist. Description: The collaboration and interdisciplinary team work required to develop continual professional development at Queen Margaret University College will be presented as will the methods used to adopt a suitable distance learning approach for adult professional learners. Considerations to the design of distance continual professional development programmes using methods such as a Virtual Learning Environment will be presented as will the considerations, planning and outcome of using Computer Mediated Conferencing. The flexibility and adaptability of Virtual Learning Environments to support various forms of continual professional development at a distance will be presented. Results: Results from student feedback has been favourable with the majority of learners



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favouring such flexible methods of learning and willing to learn again using methods such as a virtual learning environment. This part of the presentation will also include information on the pattern of learning adopted by the learners throughout the courses. The results of the student evaluation will be presented as will a reflective account of the teaching experience with recommendations for those wishing to proceed with this form of teaching or learning. Conclusion: The significance of this work has been to facilitate the development of teaching and learning outside traditional educational setting in order to enhance the continual professional development experience for Physiotherapists. Consequently, the experience in using distance learning for continual professional development for Physiotherapists has lead to an understanding of how work-based learning and informal learning in the workplace can be supported academically and can be awarded academic credit, contributing to future continual professional developments for Physiotherapist.