Life Long Learning

I was once again privileged to attend the Life Long Learning Conference, which this year took place in Rotorua, New Zealand. Apart from the fact that the country is so beautiful, it was a really enjoyable conference – totally practical and down to earth.

We came back with loads of useful information that will be easy to incorporate into our work. It’s good to see that we’re on track with the way we’re going about CPD. With the long awaited regulations published for comment and the Council website ready for action, it should be relatively plain sailing.

A couple of things in particular struck me. The first was that it is critical to introduce CPD at student level. Now that sounded strange to me. Students are on such a steep learning curve anyway – why on earth should they be involved in CPD? Actually, it’s not that silly. The point is to cultivate the habit of using the CPD cycle correctly. If you learn right from the beginning that you need to reflect and evaluate everything it will be much easier to carry on later.

The other thing that seemed important to me was the accreditation of CPD courses. This may sound like a contradiction – after all, we’ve said for years that any CPD activity will be acceptable so why should anything be accredited? I think the mindswitch came for me with the realisation that the point of accreditation is a form of quality assurance. We may joke about using well known magazines as sources of knowledge but we’re all aware of the pitfalls of using unreliable sources. So accreditation of a CPD provider or a CPD course makes sense if we want to make sure that the knowledge we acquire comes from a credible source.

Is CPD really going to work?

Of course, there are cynics among us. They just know that people will cheat. They’ll say they did things they didn’t really do, or they learned things that they really didn’t learn, or they’ll say that they are applying their newfound knowledge when really nothing has changed.

Maybe “they” are right. I’m sure there are people who will fabricate just a little. But I seriously hope that they are in the minority. If they do it, they’re the losers. And I still maintain that you and I are engaged in CPD activities every day of our working lives. So it seriously shouldn’t inconvenience us. It’s just the recording we have to get used to. We can do that. Can’t we?

Annual review of the dispensing fee

We normally try to make sure that the contents of the newsletters are reprinted in the SAPJ for those members who don’t have access to email. This month, we sent out an important newsletter, dealing with the annual review of the dispensing fee. By the time you read this, the deadline will have passed so we’re not going to print the newsletter, but it’s such an important topic that we do at least need to mention it.

At the office, we felt pretty strongly about the need for pharmacists to submit correct information. Incorrect or incomplete information will obviously directly impact on the dispensing fee that will be calculated. A zero-base model was used to calculate the dispensing fee. This is a theoretical model that doesn’t necessarily reflect the real situation in all pharmacies. Quite apart from the legal requirement that the dispensing fee should be reviewed annually, the need for actual pharmacy data in order to review the dispensing fee is therefore essential. We’re hoping that sufficient information was sent to the Department of Health to assist in the determination of the fee, but I guess we’ll have to wait and see.

Draft regulations

The PSSA office has been rather busy recently. Sometimes months can go past without new legislation appearing, and all of a sudden we had four pieces of draft legislation from the Pharmacy Council and two from the Medicines Control Council. Each required input from our national executive committee so that we could formulate a submission commenting on the draft legislation.

I guess it’s a good sign that so much draft legislation appeared. There are so many things happening in our professional environment that it’s good when supporting legislation is published. Now what we want to see is that the old legislation, much of which is seriously outdated and/or contradictory, is cleaned up. I’m hoping it happens in my lifetime.

Lorraine Osman