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Utilization of Technology in Continuing Professional Development and Training for Healthcare Providers: Current Trends and the Future Post-COVID-19 Era

Mohamed Aabdien^{1,*}, Ibtihal Abdallah², Ahmed Awaisu³

ABSTRACT

Background: The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has triggered a global emergency in all social realms, including but not restricted to the economy, health, and education. The health sector requires all healthcare professionals to be well-equipped with the latest advances in knowledge and research through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and postgraduate training programs such as residencies and fellowships. These educational endeavors have been severely affected and potentially compromised since they heavily rely on learning through face-to-face interactive activities. Methods: This is a narrative review that discusses the utilization of distance learning in CPD and postgraduate training programs, and the potential for a more active utilization in the post- COVID-19 era as one of the effective tools to meet healthcare practitioners' education, training, and professional development needs.

Results: Through this review, we propose a shift towards a more active utilization of online tools for on-site and distance healthcare training and CPD activities, via online platforms that offer video and audio facilities. The advantages of this approach include the flexibility of using such methods, being more convenient, cost-effective, as well as promising continuity even in challenging situations like the current pandemic, aiming at equipping healthcare personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure safe and effective care for their patients. This is in consideration to several key features for effective distance learning platforms.³ Figure 1 is a conceptual framework that summarizes this approach and addresses the problem, solutions, and challenges to overcome.

Conclusion: The current traditional educational model of healthcare training, education, and CPD have been challenged in terms of its effectiveness and continuity, especially during complicated situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this model needs to evolve and utilize distance learning solutions in the era post-COVID-19, in order to guarantee its continuity to equip healthcare workers with the needful skills for safe and effective patient care.

Keywords: COVID-19, Continuing Professional Development, healthcare training, residency programs, fellowship programs

Medical Education, Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar

²Clinical Pharmacy Department, Hamad General Hospital, Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar

³Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Practice, College of Pharmacy, QU Health, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

*Email: maabdien1@hamad.qa

¹Community Medicine Training Program,

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CPD DURING COVID-19

Pandemic has interrupted the Continuing Professional Development activities of practicing healthcare professionals, due to the high reliance of the current activities models on the traditional person-to-person learning activities.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Key Features of Effective Virtual Learning Platform:

- Integration: Availability of an easily accessible website in addition to an application that can be downloaded to different devices, such as desktops, mobile phones, etc.
- Collaboration: Eases of accessibility by multiple users simultaneously, and the ability to share and edit documents, slides, sheets, etc.
- Education: Could stream and record lectures/ conferences and provide an interactive platform.
- Communication: Provides space for virtual meeting rooms, announcements, alerts, and messages.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

- Lack of knowledge on how to use the software might be a challenge for some healthcare professionals.
- The attitude of some professionals such as resistance to change to the new technologies may represent a significant challenge, especially when taking into consideration the time and efforts needed for training.
- Lack of or limited access to the Internet or the used software and associated educational materials. especially in resource-constrained environments.
- Cybersecurity concerns and potential eavesdropping.
- Cost can often be a challenge to using technology and shifting to online platforms, especially for resource-limited settings.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework addressing CPD during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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