



## Reflection & Reflective Practice

Information for pharmacy staff in London, Beds. & Herts. and Essex undertaking Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

### Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is a systematic, ongoing, cyclical process of self-directed learning. The responsibility for your development lies with **you**.

The CPD cycle (diagram above) underpins and provides a framework for CPD activities.

**Reflection (on practice)** - This is the stage where you identify your learning / development needs. The ability to reflect or think about what you have done, how you did it and how you could do it better or differently, or apply that insight in the future is an important skill which will take practice to develop.

**Planning** - This is where you consider how you will meet the learning / development needs you have identified during reflection.

**Action** - Do what you have planned and record it. Record what you have learnt.

**Evaluation (reflection on learning)** - This stage completes the cycle. You assess how effective your learning has been. Evaluation of learning involves reflection.

### Reflection and Reflective Practice

#### How does reflection relate to learning?

Educational researchers have identified two key types of learner (Entwistle 1984).

- **Information seekers** - accumulate facts and learn patterns. Their learning can be mechanical and they try to achieve deep learning through comprehensive knowledge

- **Understanding seekers** search for personal meaning, relating what they learn to past experiences, exploring potential connections and discrepancies. In other words they reflect

Research shows that deep learning is a more realistic goal when a reflective approach is used (Marton and Saljo 1984). So whether or not reflection is your preferred learning style, try to master it.

#### What is reflection?

It is a thought process which involves:

- looking back at events and asking questions (**retrospective**)
- looking forward (crystal ball gazing) and asking questions (**prospective**)
- self-assessment of practice / competence in a given situation
- looking for learning points within the scenario or situation on which you reflect
- identifying learning / development needs

Alsop and Ryan (1996) offer this useful metaphor to help us understand reflection better:

**Retrospective reflection** is like looking at a photograph or a video. It tells us about ourselves in the past, where we were or what we were doing.

**Prospective reflection** is like looking at a holiday brochure or video before we go away. We get ideas of what it might be like, what we might do or whom we will meet. It is almost like superimposing ourselves into the picture.

Using reflection of either sort, or a combination, helps us to learn.

### Definitions of reflection

"...an activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull over it and evaluate it." (Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985))

"...through reflection and analysis we strive to understand the experience." (Osterman and Kottkamp (1993))

This striving for understanding links reflection with learning. When you reflect on an incident (**retrospective reflection**), you ask yourself questions e.g.

- What happened?
- What was I trying to achieve?
- What went well and why?
- What didn't go so well and why?
- How did it affect me?
- How did it affect others?
- What were the consequences?
- What could be done differently next time?
- Could something be learned from this?
- What learning / development needs have I identified from the event?

### What is reflective practice?

Reflective practice is the application of the skill of reflection with the **intention of improving our professional practice** e.g.

- self-assessment of practice / competence in a given situation **to identify areas for development and ultimately improve competence**
- looking for learning points within the scenario or situation on which you reflect **and considering how you might apply that learning in other situations to further enhance performance**
- identifying learning / development needs e.g. as part of the CPD cycle and planning to meet these **in order to improve practice**
- **changing or modifying practice** in response to the learning undertaken

### Definitions of reflective practice

"Reflective practice is a mode that links thought and action with reflection. It involves critically analysing one's actions with the **goal of improving one's professional practice.**" (Kottkamp (1990))

"A dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skilful." (Schön (1987))

### How does reflective practice differ from reflection?

- Reflection is only a part of reflective practice.
- Reflective practice is a further extension of reflection
- Reflection is a skill and reflective practice is the application of that skill to our practice to improve our performance
- Reflective practice aims to improve performance
- Whilst reflection may lead to improved understanding it does not necessarily lead to an improvement in performance

### What are the potential benefits of reflective practice?

- Improves the quality of our performance
- Allows us an objective look at our practice in order to improve
- Helps us to recognise what we do well so that we can apply these skills in other situations
- Improves professional judgment
- Helps us to learn from successes and mistakes to enhance development
- Helps us to plan for future situations and therefore respond more positively to change
- Enables us to apply the skill of reflection to the CPD cycle

### What are the potential barriers to reflective practice?

- Time
- Preconceptions that it is difficult or not worth doing
- Culture of the organisation
- Male or female

- Honesty with self
- Fear
- "A science background"

Although reflective practice sounds quite daunting, most people are already reflecting. Let's see how.

### How might you already be reflecting?

- Talking over a situation you have found difficult with a partner, friend or colleague e.g. a difficult patient or doctor or an intervention
- Thinking over the events of the day on the way home
- During your Personal Development Review (PDR), when you look at your performance during the past year, and assess your learning / development needs for the next year
- Application forms for attending training events sometimes ask you to reflect on why you feel you need to attend; and also ask for you to evaluate your learning on return to work

### How can you consolidate this reflection and turn it into reflective practice?

#### (Answers in bold)

- Talking over a situation you have found difficult with a partner, friend or colleague e.g. a difficult patient or doctor or an intervention **and thinking about how you could change or modify your practice to improve the outcome**
- Thinking over the events of the days on the way home **and looking for learning points in the scenario or situation in order to enhance performance**
- During your Personal Development Review (PDR), when you look at your performance during the past year, and assess your learning / development needs for the next year **in order to improve your practice**
- Application forms for attending training events sometimes ask you to reflect on why you feel you need to attend; and also ask for you to evaluate your learning on return to work; **use the CPD cycle to record this**

## Reflective Practice in CPD

### How can I undertake retrospective reflection on practice?

Significant event analysis (otherwise known as 'critical incidents'):

- Looking back at events which have happened, thinking about how you handled the situation(s) and whether you have identified a new learning / development need as a result
- The possibilities of events to reflect on are endless e.g. any event that you feel shows some learning / development need or highlights an existing skill that may be used in other situations

### How can I undertake prospective reflection on practice?

#### Career planning

- Reflecting on development that you require to meet a perceived future need
- Where do I want to be 5 years time?
- Prepare a Personal Development Plan
- Rotational staff could reflect prior to starting in each new area

#### Using the KSF

- You can assess your knowledge and skills against your KSF outline or for the next job you want to apply for

#### Using competency frameworks / performance standards

- E.g. The General, Advanced and Consultant Level competency frameworks for pharmacists, pre-reg. performance standards, NVOs, RPSGB competencies

#### Crystal ball gazing

- Are there any new service developments affecting your role?
- Use department business plan or new Department of Health papers to get ideas of what new knowledge and skills to develop to fit in with these changes

For more information on CPD and reflective practice visit our website

[www.londonpharmacy.nhs.uk/educationandtraining/cpd.htm](http://www.londonpharmacy.nhs.uk/educationandtraining/cpd.htm)