



VALIDATION OF A NEED ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR THE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONGST DENTAL PRACTITIONERS.

Periodontics

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ABSTRACT

The continuing professional development (CPD) is very vital aspect of adult learning, especially for the professionals to keep abreast with the changing trends in their respective profession. To design the CPD program it is necessary to assess the need of the target population. Dentistry is one of the most evolving professions in today's world and Continuing Dental Education forms an important avenue for these professionals to upgrade their skill and knowledge. In this study we have designed a questionnaire to assess the need for the Continuing professional development amongst the dentists practicing in Gujarat. The first the content validation was done with the help of subject experts. Then the questionnaire was administered to 32 participants with a mixed population of General Practitioners and experts in the field of the dentistry. The questionnaire was assessed for the Validity and Reliability by using Student-t test and Cronbach's alpha test. It was concluded that the said tool was found to be Valid and Reliable.

KEYWORDS

Introduction

The volume and the state of higher education systems today have been among the issues of higher education policy in the economically advanced countries of the world for more than four decades. Continuing Professional Development forms an important component of the higher education, as it is vital in upgrading the skills and knowledge to match with the changing trends and innovations.¹

Continuing Education refers to any type of post-secondary education, used to either obtain additional certifications, or as credits required for maintaining a license. Almost anybody can take continuing education courses for personal or professional enrichment. This type of education is aimed exclusively to adults who already possess a college or university degree.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison, in 1907, was the first academic institution in the US to offer what today would be considered an identifiable Continuing Education Program. Continuing professional development (CPD) or Continuing professional education (CPE) is the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional lives.¹

The profession of dentistry is changing very fast. Driven by patient's desires to enjoy optimum oral health, function and esthetics, dentistry is witnessing a rapid and continuous development of better materials as well as techniques. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in dental profession is highly required to continually update their skills and knowledge in order to remain professionally competent and achieve their true potential.²

The assessment of needs is an integral part of program planning for continuing education. Ideally, it is both the beginning and the end of planning process. First, it formulates the learning objectives and then it measures whether the needs have been met through the learning activities. Basically, two types of learning needs can be measured. Real need – an existing deficiency in an individual, group institution, or community. It may or may not be recognized those who have need, and it is usually determined at least in part by an objective observer. Felt need- a deficiency perceived by a person, group, or institution. It usually indicates educational preferences and is connected with a high level of motivation. It may or may not be a real or educational need. Felt or perceived needs in dental health care, for example, may best be identified through questionnaires or interviews with potential course

participants, whereas real needs may best identified through strategies that include objective evaluation such as audits, testing of performance, and observations of patients.³

The dentistry in India is rapidly developing in both quantitative and qualitative care. However, to-date there is no published data that specifically deals with the perceived needs of the Indian general dental practitioners for continuing professional development. Such data when available will facilitate efforts towards up-gradation of skills and knowledge of the dental fraternity in India.

Hence we decided to develop a questionnaire to assess the need of CPD among the dental practicing population in the state of Gujarat. This part of the study was aimed at

Material and Methods

The questionnaire carrying 11 sets of the questions was developed after studying the literature and taking the inputs from the experts. The questionnaire was the mix of the Closed-ended questions and some of the open-ended questions. It was first decided to do the pilot trial of the questionnaire to check for the Validity and Reliability of the tool before administering to the larger population. The prepared questionnaire was first given to the language experts and the subject experts for the validation of the content and the language. After this stage the questionnaire was administered to the mixed sample of the 35 practicing dentists and the experts, who were randomly selected from the dentists practicing in the state of Gujarat. This questionnaire was then administered to the selected population and then collected. The 3 questionnaires which were not completely filled were discarded and final 32 forms were analyzed for validation and reliability.

Results:

Out of total of 32 valid participants in the study, 6 were specialists (MDS) and 26 were General practitioners (BDS). Some open-ended questions like "What specific subjects for CDEs are of interest to you?" were personally evaluated to arrive at the close-ended question for the second phase of this study. The most frequently given answers were shortlisted and they formed the options for closed-ended questions for the second phase of this research to be administered to larger population.

The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using the Cronbach's Alpha. Minimum value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.935, which is

nearer to one. Hence the scale was found to be reliable. Reliability of the scale is more than 90%.

The validity of the tool was evaluated by using the Student t test. There is no statistically significant difference in mean scores given by respondents and experts (p -values > 0.05). Hence it can be concluded that the scale has concurrent validity.

Discussion

The need assessment is a primary and fundamental step in planning process for any continuing professional education. As mentioned earlier the assessment of the needs should be done both at the start and the end of planning.³

Some of the countries like United States, United Kingdom, Canada and some European countries have made the continuing professional development as a mandatory prerequisite for renewal of practicing license. Such CPD programs in these countries are recognized and accredited by the respective governing body. In United States there is a Continuing Education Recognition program (CERP) by American dental association for recognition of standards and procedures for different CDE programs. They record the involvement of participants and monitor the quality of programs. It is observed that the policies in Asian countries are more relaxed. In India there are discussion and recommendation of mandatory CPD. Though it is not uniform all over the country, the final decision is left to the discretion of regulating state councils. Some of the state dental councils had made it mandatory to have some prescribed CDE point before renewal of their annual registration. In India there deficiency of such framework or uniform guidelines on which the continuing education programs should be run.^{4,5,6}

The Dental council of India is a supreme regulatory body for the dental education in India. The course and curriculum as prescribed by Dental Council is uniform all over the country. Hence it was decided to delimit the study to the practitioners in Gujarat, which can be representative for the whole country. Through our questionnaire we are planning to assess the needs among the dental practitioner in Gujarat.

The questionnaire developed here focused on various aspects of relevance to the practitioners who desires to pursue CPD like hours and timings of the CPD, location, and hindrances, if any, in attending the same, etc. The preferred topics for CPD were asked through open ended to understand the current trend and the need of the practitioners.

Conclusion:

The questionnaire developed for need assessment was refined after the inputs for the subject and language experts. The statistical analysis of the tool developed for the assessment of the need was found it to be valid and reliable.

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