

Continuing professional development - the way forward

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Continuing professional development (CPD) has moved into a new era with the acceptance by the Health Professions Council of a formal CPD points system. It is now necessary to accumulate points in order to stay eligible to practise medicine. Previously the attendance of congresses, symposia and workshops was a voluntary exercise. This has changed now and the need for a structured Continuing Professional Development Program is greater than ever.

The Radiological Society of South Africa regards the organization of CPD programs as part of its core business. The South African Radiological Congress is set to become a regular event. Discussions are under way to decide the frequency and format of this event. The aim is to accommodate in this meeting a combination of didactic and scientific sessions in order also to stimulate local research.

A second initiative is the formation of the Continuing Professional Development Trust Fund of the Society. The aim is to accrue a capital sum of three million Rand. The income from this fund will provide the necessary finances to organize two to three Radiological workshops a year. These workshops will address various Radiological topics as well as new techniques or modalities.

Several of the international companies that sell radiology equipment, film, and contrast media in South Africa have been approached to become contributors to this fund, and quite a few have already pledged their contributions. The fund is however principally the property of and to the benefit of the members of the RSSA. It is therefore imperative that all members of the Society contribute to this fund in order to make CPD in radiology accessible to all members.

As stated above, the income of the fund will be used to organize workshops on various topics. Contributors to the fund will be able to attend these workshops free of charge. These workshops will be held on consecutive weekends in two different locations in the country. As travel and accommodation

usually constitute by far the greatest part of the cost of attending a meeting, this arrangement should result in substantial state savings to radiologists.

A Board of Trustees representative of all contributors will govern the fund. An independent administrator will be appointed by the Board to ensure proper and safe investment of the fund. The fund will be registered as a non-profit organization and, according to law, a certain percentage of the income of the fund will have to be reinvested in order to ensure the long-term growth of the fund.

All stakeholders will be able to propose topics for the workshops. An Educational Committee will be established to control the standard and content of the workshops. The venues and topics will be decided upon well in advance and will be advertised on the fund's Web page.

Letters will soon be sent to all members of the Society, explaining the fund and its mission. A five-year pledge of less than R200 per month will ensure free access to all the workshops for the rest of the contributor's working life. In addition, a lasting asset will be established for the Society. This may expand into other projects such as scholarships for young radiologists to attend institutions abroad, as well as funding of radiologists to attend other local meetings.

As Chairman of the Congress Committee of the RSSA, I am proud to be associated with this initiative. I urge all members of the Society to become contributors to their own CPD fund and in so doing, ensure their own future.