



Choosing Multiple Educational Approaches or Formats

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities are available in many different formats including: large-group learning at conferences or seminars; small-group learning during courses or workshops; skills development during laboratories; distance-education through websites, video or tele-conferencing; reading journals, texts, or electronic publications; watching and listening to DVDs, videos, or on-line presentations; consultation with colleagues and content experts; or independent research of online resources.

Depending on your specific learning objectives and individual learning style, a variety of formats for professional development may be useful. For example, when you are learning about a new therapeutic approach for the first time, scanning the medical literature or attending a keynote address at a large conference may be a good introduction. When you are developing skills in the practice of the new therapy, small group case-based discussions or skills building workshops may be more effective. When you are consolidating the new skills into a protocol for your practice setting, discussion with colleagues or independent research on the internet may be necessary.

The following table lists which educational formats might be useful at different stages of the learning process:

Build Foundational Knowledge	Develop Skills	Implement in Practice
Congress, Conference, Lecture Webcasts, On Line Modules Reading or Scanning Journals Small group sessions DVDs and Videos	Workshops Case studies Ask the experts Role play Interactive Online Preceptorships	Discussion with colleagues Teaching others

Active learning is the active engagement of the learner in the learning process. This can include engagement with others (participants and teachers), engagement with the materials (i.e. case studies), and professional reflection. *Passive attendance at didactic lectures as the sole educational intervention increases awareness, but rarely results in effective professional development applied to practice.*

Interaction with colleagues is an essential component of the process whereby you apply new information and knowledge to your practice. Practitioners rarely make any changes in practice without first consulting with other professionals or finding confirmation from multiple, authoritative resources. Active discussion with colleagues validates information presented in journals and via CPD courses; it actually stimulates thinking and the translation of information to knowledge.

In most cases, professional development is more effective when multiple, complementary educational formats are planned and sequenced appropriately, to explore a new learning objective and develop new skills and expertise in practice. *Single, stand-alone educational events may prove to be less relevant to practice.*