

# DRUG TOPICS

## Are professional portfolios, beyond CE, in your future?

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### COMMUNITY PRACTICE

## Are professional portfolios, beyond CE, in your future?

In its never-ending quest for the Holy Grail of improving pharmacist competence, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy is now touting portfolios as a way to foster lifelong learning through continuing professional development.

Instead of willy-nilly racking up hours of continuing education credits, pharmacists should assess areas in which they may be weak and then take courses and programs to bolster their professional prowess, according to proponents of continuing professional development (CPD). To keep track of their educational endeavors and show how the knowledge and skills were implemented and then evaluated, pharmacists would build a professional portfolio. The ongoing process of assessment, education, implementation, and evaluation would be the basis of CPD.

"CPD is a voluntary professional development system that is self-directed by the pharmacist who develops a portfolio of experiences based on his or her area of practice," said Avery Spunt, R.Ph., M.Ed., NABP competency assessment director. "We need to get the word out that it's nonpunitive—that when it's done right, it's supportive of pharmacists, pharmaceutical care, and improving outcomes for patients."

The first phase of NABP's CPD project will be an Internet-based self-assessment tool pharmacists can use to take stock of their professional needs and interests, said John Fiacco, NABP chairman. Succeeding phases will enlist other pharmacy organizations in a collaborative effort to provide continuing education resources and portfolio design and management strategies for pharmacists to change their practices to better serve as the patient's medication advisor.

"This is a hallmark project that has the potential to redefine some of the basic tenets of pharmacy," Fiacco told attendees at NABP's recent annual meeting. "It is a good project for pharmacy, for NABP, for pharmacists, and, most important, for the patients that pharmacists serve."

NABP is working with all the pharmacy stakeholders to be sure its CPD program is pharmacist friendly, accessible, relevant, achievable, and affordable, said Spunt. He added that NABP is developing the self-evaluation examination for pharmacists and an integrated database system to support CPD information. The evaluation phase of the CPD cycle may involve peer review, mentor review, or use of specific instruments, such as the Pharmacy's Framework tool developed by the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy.

The goal is not to replace the current system of mandatory CE, said Peter Vlasses, Pharm.D., executive director, American Council on Pharmaceutical Education. Speaking at NABP's recent annual meeting, he said, "What is needed is to make sure pharmacists maintain and demonstrate their abilities in knowledge, skills, and competence, as well as improve their performance and enhance their career progression. Continuing professional development allows for all of that. I want to make it clear that CPD is about the quality improvement of our existing system of CE for pharmacists and is not a replacement for our existing system. CPD is where we go next, not where we start over."

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