

The Stairway to Success

Mike Busby, Denplan Dental Advisor and former GDP, discusses the Denplan Stairway Programme and how developing your skills and knowledge can not only keep you up-to-date on the latest clinical techniques but could also help to attract and maintain patients.

I think it is fair to say that continuing professional development (CPD) has always been an integral part of professional life, even before it became an essential requirement. But has the obligation to notch up those CPD hours meant it's lost its focus for the profession – especially given the raft of choices available, with hundreds more courses and providers both on and off line?

Development, as you know, should not purely be about accumulating CPD hours in order to fulfil your annual quota, but part of a structured development plan to benefit both your practice and your patients. Training and development should be about supporting practice success and although there are some CPD subjects which are required by our Registration authority, the next step is to identify each team member's additional development needs.

The following information gives an overview of the Denplan Stairway Programme as well as the wider benefits of CPD and postgraduate education. I will also touch on some ideas of how to find both relevant opportunities and appropriate training to give your practice every advantage in this increasingly regulated and consumer-led profession.

The Denplan Stairway Programme

Denplan has recently launched The Denplan Stairway Programme – a structured development programme resulting in the Denplan Stairway Award - designed to be relevant to any dentist in general practice. It includes a series of units and aims to support postgraduate development in general practice skills through structured CPD which could be a stepping stone to a further qualification.

The Denplan Stairway Programme consists of a series of units covering: clinical, communication, professionalism and leadership & management skills. There are 12 units in total, which may be taken in any order and at many locations throughout the UK. The format is based on a six-hour interactive Training Event, led by a highly experienced speaker. Delegates can then take part in an optional practice-based project, designed to encourage audit, peer review, teamwork and reflective learning once you have returned from the study day to your practice.

Each unit can earn an individual up to 20 hours of CPD, or two educational credits – which can then be used towards the attainment of external awards such as the MSc in Primary Dental Care at Birmingham University. This makes the Programme not only useful for training and development, but also a unique opportunity to gain a substantial qualification recognised by peers as well as patients.

The Denplan Stairway Programme has now also been recognised by the Faculty of General Dental Practice (FGDP (UK)), for accreditation towards its ‘Career Pathway’. Dentists achieving the Denplan Stairway Award can claim 20 credits towards Stage 2 of the Pathway (10 clinical plus 10 ‘other’ credits).

The Denplan Stairway Programme units are:

There are 12 course units:		
1	Clinical Leadership and Governance for Success	This course covers the key skills of leadership and management required to maintain practice success.
2	CPD Essentials	Ongoing registration with the GDC requires Dentists and DCPs to undertake CPD in recommended core subjects. Delegates will cover all of the principal core subjects.
3	Clinical Consultations	A review of best practice in conducting clinical consultations for the general dental practitioner.
4	Periodontal Risk Management	A review of best practice in periodontology for the general dental practitioner.
5	Endodontic Update	A review of current best practice in endodontics. Delegates will have some opportunity for hands-on involvement.
6	Minimally Invasive Techniques	A look at the importance of, and techniques for, preserving natural tissues.
7	Prosthetic Paradise	A review of current best practice in prosthetics.
8	The Scope of Implants	An introduction to the contemporary scope of implant dentistry in general practice. Delegates will have some opportunity for hands-on involvement in this course.

9	Advanced Restorative Techniques	A review of current best practice in advanced restorative dentistry.
10	Denplan National Conference	The Denplan National Conference will be hosted at the Marriott Forest of Arden, Warwickshire. Friday 9 September - Sunday 11 September 2011
11	Denplan Excel Accreditation	The only independently validated Clinical Governance programme, it allows you to focus on dental regulation and your patient care. Denplan Excel is an advanced Accreditation Programme for dentists to help support Clinical Governance and professional regulation.
12	The Secret of Success	This online course explores the evidence base for the fundamental key to running a successful dental practice.

Denplan Excel accreditation attracts four educational credits. For those practices who are already Denplan Excel accredited, this will automatically give you a four-credit head start.

Training courses for all

With the economic climate still anything but stable, CPD is something that none of us in the dental profession should be taking lightly. In fact, evidence from the last recession in the early 90's demonstrated that businesses which identified and implemented a development strategy were more likely to survive and thrive as the economy recovered.

There are a wide range of useful training courses around these days and some payment plan providers also offer tailor-made options for your specific practice needs. These can range from bespoke practice-based development days, right through to regional team days. Alternatively, you could chose to attend local courses that provide an opportunity for staff in similar roles to meet and learn together, benefiting both your employees and your practice. It's also a good idea to look for courses you can undertake as a team, as this will help the teamwork and efficiency of the whole practice when you come back to day-to-day work.

I don't think that any dentist would struggle to find training courses to help them to gain CPD – although finding the time to do them is another matter! However, I think it's really important to reflect on how they will benefit your practice team, how they will benefit your business and how they will benefit your patients. How to undertake your structured training and development plan is entirely up to you, but hopefully the information above has given you a few ideas...I will leave the rest in your very capable hands!

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