There’s a very enterprising pharmacist’s assistant who I need to meet! And no, I don’t know his or her name, or where he or she works, or anything that can tell me where to find him or her! So why do I want to meet this person? I know only one fact about him or her, but I can deduce a lot more from that one fact.

At a recent meeting at Pharmacy Council, we were given some interesting information about the number of people who use the Council’s CPD website to record information. This includes the number of pharmacists, pharmacy students and pharmacist’s assistants. We are given just the numbers, not the names. There is one post-basic pharmacist’s assistant who has completed the annual declaration, begun recording 19 different CPD entries and has completed 15 of those entries.

I don’t know what to say. “Wow!” doesn’t seem adequate.

What I can tell you is that this is a very enterprising pharmacist’s assistant, and your employer must be delighted that you work where you do.

Why am I getting excited about it? Because it isn’t yet a legal requirement to record your CPD activities on the website. We’re still waiting for the regulations to be published that will make it compulsory. So if you’re using the website, it’s still on a strictly voluntary basis.

If you haven’t yet begun using it, remember that when the regulations are published, you will have no choice. Obviously we’re aware that some people don’t have access to the Internet. We will have to make another plan for them, but let me tell you about the website and what it needs from you.

The first thing you need to do is to log in. All your information is password-protected so no-one else can have access to it unless you want them to. If you don’t have a password, write to customercare@sapc.za.org or phone them.

Once you’ve logged in, go to the CPD page. Before you can begin recording a CPD event, you need to fill in an annual declaration. Your contact details need to be updated and you need to analyse exactly what you do most during the day. Your CPD then needs to be based on what you actually do at work, or even on what you want to do if you’re thinking of changing jobs. Think about it. If you work in a hospital pharmacy and you want to move to a community pharmacy, it might be a good idea to start working on the things you’ll need to know before you actually move there.

Having done that, you can begin recording your CPD. It’s still the same idea as before. You’ve read about the CPD cycle. Now you just follow it. You identify the thing you want to learn by reflecting on your practice. What do you need to know? Why? What was the trigger? Did your supervisor tell you to find out about it? Or did you realise yourself that you didn’t know it? Did one of your friends tell you about it? Did you read an article in this journal that interested you?

The next step is planning. What do you need to do? Read the article thoroughly? Find a reference book? Practise doing something? When are you planning on doing this?

After that, it’s easy. Just do it! And then record what you did, including how long it took you.

The last phase of the CPD cycle is evaluation, where you ask yourself if you met your learning objective. Have you already applied the knowledge? Did you get any feedback about it? If you haven’t applied it yet, you can always fill in the first three phases and leave the last phase until after you’ve applied. I suspect that is the reason that the pharmacist’s assistant I told you about has only submitted 15 completed entries.

If you don’t have access to the Internet, you can still follow this approach with CPD, as long as you record the process somewhere. Keep a file for this purpose.

When you start becoming aware of all the learning experiences that face us every day, you’ll probably be amazed that there are so many. Or maybe you’ll realise that we work in an environment in which there is always the opportunity to develop our knowledge and skills.

Enjoy it, enter it and experience the satisfaction of knowing that you are on top of your game!

Lorraine Osman