

## The status of continuing professional development among select medical and health librarians in the city of Manila

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### Abstract

*Licensed librarians in the Philippines require 45 credit units to ensure that their licenses get renewed for a period of three years. With the recent enactment of the Philippine Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Act of 2016, how equipped are the medical and health librarians in gaining formal, informal, nonformal and lifelong learning activities to qualify for the prescribed number of points prior to the renewal of their professional license? This study will provide a trend analysis on the types of programs that each medical or health librarian attend or engage into. This paper will compare the activities of the librarians with regards to the established matrix of activities that each professional librarian would need to achieve prior to their license renewal.*

**Key words:** professional practice; licensure; librarians; Philippines.

### Introduction

Filipino librarians should pass an examination to receive their licenses to legally practice the profession. Republic Act (RA) 9246 or the Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003, which repealed RA 6966, regulates the practice of Philippine librarianship. There are more than 5,000 licensed librarians as of April 2014 (1).

The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Act of 2016 lapsed into law on July 21, 2016 without the signature of the Philippine President. Under Article VI, Section 27 (1) of the Philippine Constitution, a ratified bill becomes a law if the President does not veto or approve it within 30 days of receipt. The Philippine Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) implements and enforces regulatory policies with respect to the licensing of various professions in the country. It issued a resolution to amend the revised guidelines on CPD program for all registered and licensed professionals. Licensed librarians are required to accumulate a total of 45 credit units for them to renew their licenses. Renewal of licenses takes every three years. While renewal is being done every three years, there are no other mechanisms required to renew their licenses.

You just need to submit the necessary documents and pay the renewal fee. With the CPD Law, you will have to earn your credit units and submit proofs of attendance or work done for you to be renewed.

### Objectives

How can librarians address this new development in their field? This paper will look into the activities of select medical and health librarians in the country. This will serve as a projection or trend on how librarians actively participate and develop themselves even if the CPD Law has not yet enacted. A sample will be taken from the select librarians in Manila. Participants will be drawn from the active list of the Medical and Health Librarians Association of the Philippines (MAHLAP).

We all know that attending CPD activities require some budget and financial assistance. What kind of support do they get from their employers? This study will look into the CPD activities of librarians for the last three years (2014-2016). Please take note that starting 2017, librarians may avail of credit unit points from accredited CPD providers, if the organization is not accredited, they may convert that into a self-directed learning.

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### Review of related literature

#### ***The need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)***

CPD programs enhance knowledge, strengthen technical skills and revalidate innate competencies of professionals including librarians (1). Continuing professional development activities maintains professional standards and is a way to combat professional obsolescence (2). It also develops a feeling of confidence and revalidates proficient expertise (3). Moreover, CPD leads to job advancement and professional competence. Librarians are kept abreast and updated with recent trends (1).

#### ***CPD of librarians around the world***

Just like any librarians, medical and health librarians need to capitalize on lifelong learning activities to improve their skills and increase their knowledge. Medical librarians are there to help health professionals in providing quality healthcare to patients in seeking for the right information and providing the best information access to health care industries (4). While most of the library organizations do not have CPD specifically mandated for health librarians (5), the Philippines, thru the Board for Librarians, have established the CPD Council for Librarians to uplift the credibility and status of Filipino health librarians. Various medical and health library associations establish a set of standards or list of competencies for their librarians to follow. Lawton & Burns (2014) enumerated the following: MLA's Competencies for Lifelong Learning and Professional Success (USA), HSLG's Standards for Irish Health Care Libraries and Information Services (Ireland), CILIP's Working in Health Information and the Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (UK), ALIA's Guidelines for Australian Health Libraries and the Library and Information Sector: Core Knowledge, Skills and Attributes (Australia), and CHLA's Standards for Library and Information Services in Canadian Health Care Facilities (Canada).

#### ***CPD of librarians in the Philippines***

The recently approved prescription, issuance and promulgation of the "Standards for special libraries in the Philippines" states that librarians and library

personnel should engage in continuing professional development (6). As we all know, medical and health librarians are considered special librarians. Likewise, the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians issued another resolution to prescribe, adopt and promulgate national competency-based standards for Filipino librarians. The resolution is "deemed to be an integral part or component of the CPD of all registered and licensed librarians" (7). These standards consist of personal and professional competencies. Personal competencies include communication, customer service, leadership, lifelong learning and personal growth, ethics and values, interpersonal and cultural. Professional competencies include managing information resources, managing information services, managing information tools and technologies, and managing information organizations.

#### **The CPD Law**

On 21 July 2016, Republic Act 10912: Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016 lapsed into law without the signature of the President of the Republic. Because of this, all 43 professions are now mandated to upgrade the practice of their professions by gaining learning activities which would advance our knowledge, skills and technical competencies. As defined by the law, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) refers to the *inculcation of advanced knowledge, skills and ethical values in a post-licensure specialization or in an inter- or multidisciplinary field of study, for assimilation into professional practice, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning*. Each association can now file with the PRC as the accredited CPD Provider. The CPD Council is in-charge of ensuring that the association applying as CPD Provider is competent to handle the CPD Program. CPD Programs may consist of activities that are structured or unstructured for as long as it provides better learning outcomes. Programs may be formal, nonformal, informal, self-directed, online learning or based on professional work experience. From now on, CPD programs are mandatory. To be recognized and accredited by the CPD Council, the local CPD provider must pay P 5,000 (94 Euro) and the foreign provider must pay P 8,000 (150 Euro). For professional librarians, each one must acquire 45 credit units in a span of three years for their license to be renewed.

**CPD activities**

Each professional may do any of the following activities and they will be granted corresponding credit units: professional track (participant, resource speaker, panelist, reactor, facilitator, moderator, monitor), academic track (master’s degree, doctorate degree, professorial chair, residency, fellowship grants, post-graduate studies), and self-directed (publications, module development, inventions, study tours, consultancy, socio-civic engagements, awards).

Figure 1 gives us a sample of the matrix of CPD activities per program/activity, credit units a professional may possibly earn and the supporting documents needed to verify the validity of the program or activity.

MATRIX OF CPD ACTIVITIES		
PROGRAM / ACTIVITY	CREDIT UNITS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENT
<b>1. PROFESSIONAL TRACK (TRAINING OFFERED BY ACCREDITED CPD PROVIDERS, Face to Face / Online)</b>		
1.1 PARTICIPANT	APPROVED CREDIT UNITS FOR THE PROGRAM	CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE WITH NUMBER OF HOURS, SEMINAR PROGRAM AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
1.2 RESOURCE SPEAKER	3 CU PER HOUR	PHOTOCOPY OF CERTIFICATE, COPY OF PAPERS AND PROGRAM INVITATION
1.3 PANELIST / REACTOR	2 CU PER HOUR	CERTIFICATION FROM SPONSORING ORGANIZATION COPY OF PROGRAM
1.4 FACILITATOR / MODERATOR	1 CU PER HOUR	CERTIFICATION FROM SPONSORING ORGANIZATION COPY OF PROGRAM
1.5 MONITOR	TWICE THE NUMBER OF APPROVED CREDIT UNITS FOR THE PROGRAM	MONITORING REPORT, CERTIFICATE OF APPEARANCE AND THE AUTHORITY TO MONITOR
1.6 IN-SERVICE TRAINING	MAXIMUM OF 20 CU FOR A 12-MONTH PERIOD OR A FRACTION THEREOF UPON COMPLETION	CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING & TRAINING DESCRIPTION
<b>2. ACADEMIC TRACK</b>		
2.1 MASTER’S DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT	FULL CREDIT UNITS FOR COMPLIANCE PERIOD UPON COMPLETION OF DEGREE	UNIVERSITY CERTIFICATION / DIPLOMA AND TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDS (authenticated copy)
2.2 DOCTORATE DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT	FULL CREDIT UNITS UPON COMPLETION OF CANDIDACY FOR COMPLIANCE PERIOD ADDITIONAL FULL CREDIT UNITS FOR COMPLIANCE PERIOD UPON COMPLETION OF DEGREE	UNIVERSITY CERTIFICATION / DIPLOMA AND TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDS (authenticated copy)
2.3 PROFESSORIAL CHAIR	15 CU PER YEAR	CERTIFICATION OF GRANT OR APPOINTMENT PAPER
2.4 RESIDENCY / EXTERNSHIP / SPECIALTY / SUB-SPECIALTY PROGRAM	10 CU PER YEAR	HOSPITAL CERTIFICATION CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION
<b>2.5 FELLOWSHIP GRANT</b>		
2.5.1 PARTICIPANT	2 CU PER GRANT	CERTIFICATION FROM THE GRANTING INSTITUTION AND/OR CERTIFICATE OF FELLOWSHIP
2.5.2 RESOURCE SPEAKER	4 CU PER GRANT	
2.5.3 RESEARCHER	5 CU PER GRANT	
2.6 POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA	MAXIMUM OF 30 CU FOR AN 18-MONTH PERIOD OR A FRACTION THEREOF UPON COMPLETION	DIPLOMA / CERTIFICATION FROM THE INSTITUTION
<b>3. SELF-DIRECTED (TRAINING OFFERED BY NON-ACCREDITED CPD PROVIDERS, Face to Face / Online)</b>		
3.1 PARTICIPANT	CREDIT UNITS FOR THE PROGRAM AS EVALUATED BY THE CPD COUNCIL	CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE WITH NUMBER OF HOURS, SEMINAR PROGRAM AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
3.2 RESOURCE SPEAKER	3 CU PER HOUR	PHOTOCOPY OF CERTIFICATE, COPY OF PAPERS AND PROGRAM INVITATION
3.3 PANELIST / REACTOR	2 CU PER HOUR	CERTIFICATION FROM SPONSORING ORGANIZATION COPY OF PROGRAM

Fig. 1. Matrix of CPD activities.

**About MAHLAP**

The Medical and Health Librarians Association of the Philippines (MAHLAP) was officially created in 1987 as a national association for Philippine medical and health librarians. Its objectives are to: (a) encourage and promote the collection, organization and dissemination of medical and health information and library services; (b) encourage and cultivate library cooperation; (c) enhance the professional welfare of its members; and (d) uphold dignity and ethics of medical and health libraries and librarians (3). To date, they have a wide membership across the entire country. MAHLAP continues to serve not only the needs of their fellow librarians but also the public by organizing medical missions and outreach activities to penitentiary, hospitals, slum areas, orphanages and public schools (8).

**Methodology**

An online survey form was used to gather data. The form included questions that can elicit answers based from the continuing professional development activities attended by professional librarians for the last three years. The form also asks about their sex, employer, annual budget for professional development, annual budget for academic development, and various benefits they get when they are invited as resource persons or incentives they receive when they publish an intellectual output. The online form ran for a period of two weeks. Participants were pre-selected based from the MAHLAP directory of 2016. The 2016 directory lists 25 active members from the area of Manila. Out of the 25 members, 15 responded or 60% of the total population. A follow-up focus group discussion happened at the University of the Philippines – Manila College of Allied Medical Professions.

**Results and discussion**

Online survey results will be discussed in this section. Out of the 25 possible respondents, 15 of them answered the online survey form. Two (13%) were males and 13 (87%) were females. Seven (46%) came from public academic medical/health schools, 4 (27%) came from private academic medical/health schools and the rest were from public institutions and only one from an international organization.

Employer	Count
International Organization	1
Private Academic Medical/Health School	4
Public Academic Medical/Health School	7
Public Hospital/Medical Facility	1
Public Medical/Health Corporation (ie pharmaceutical company, government office, etc.)	2
Total	15

**Table 1.** *Employment type.*

73% answered that their annual budget for professional development is less than P 50,000 (930 Euro). It may be less than P 10,000 per person depending on the budget available. Registration fees for a three-day seminar-workshop or training usually costs P 5,000-6,000 exclusive of airfare and sometimes, accommodation. 80% said that their annual budget for academic development is also less than P 50,000.

Most of the time, they are granted only official time when they are invited as resource persons. Some librarians are also given transportation allowance if they get invited as guest lecturers. Invitation to give a talk or lecture also provides an added value to their resume and will give them plus points for their promotion.

To know the active participation of medical and health librarians in terms of attendance to conferences or seminars, 40% of them attended conferences at least 6 times from 2014-2016 while 33% attended more than 10. This is quite a good number if they intend to complete the 45 CPD points for a period of three years. But, this has to be sustained by other forms of CPD activities. 67% do not have an idea on how to become a resource person since they were not invited ever since. A great number of them have no experience of publishing journal articles (87%), being a peer-reviewer (80%), writing a technical paper (80%), publishing book and book chapter (87%) or being an editor (87%). Surprisingly, 60% were able to attend a local or international study tour which is

also a good basis for a self-directed learning. 53% rendered their time in some socio-civic and outreach activities. However, 73% did not receive any award or recognition for the last three years. Only 33% received fellowship grants as a participant to attend a conference.

To validate these answers, on 30 January 2017, five medical and health librarians were gathered to verify the online survey results which ran from 19-31 January 2017. A focus group discussion (FGD) occurred and they were asked the same questions based from the online questionnaire.

It was really resounding that most of them need to learn how to submit paper and research proposals. The librarians during this FGD session were academic librarians and they have the usual support of the administration, but the support that they are getting is still not enough. Perhaps they have to prove that they can be a librarian and at the same time commit themselves in pursuing research. Most of them really need the training on publishing, research writing, and paper presentation

### Conclusions

Generally, all libraries have allotted budget whether it is for professional or academic development. Filipino authors said that it is important to “allot appropriate budget and specify the need for CPD units” (9). MAHLAP as the sole provider of CPD activities for health librarians must strengthen and provide a wide array of training programs and workshops. They should also advocate for the approval or endorsement of the proposed library standard for government hospitals. Government hospital librarians need the support of MAHLAP for them to be recognized and for them to attend capacity building activities that would help them improve their technical competencies. It is obvious that Filipino medical and health librarians require the exposure they need for them to submit paper proposals and project grants. They have to explore the possibility of being invited as resource persons and instil the passion of research. It is time for Filipino medical and health librarians to establish their expertise and share their knowledge to their colleagues not just within their institutions but to their colleagues in the profession, in the Philippines and beyond.

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