

Evolution of the Continuing Education Programs in Europe

The Continuing Dental Education (CDE) is the fundamental ethical and professional obligation of every practicing Dentist.

It is the responsibility of each practitioner to improve his/her professional knowledge and clinical skills by participating in an appropriate and officially recognized Continuing Education Program.

A well organized CDE is also a mean to improve the image of our profession as Health Care Provider.

There is a trend in most of the European countries that see the importance of knowledge update and do not believe that the majority of practitioners will join CEP courses voluntarily.

Some countries have a mandatory CEP requesting a certain level of credit points in order to be able to allow the renewal of the work permit; others have no system for re-licensing or CEP. Some countries are hesitating, due to political difficulties based on the relationship between the Dental Associations, the Universities and the Ministry of Health. During these last years, many problems have been raised concerning CDE, such as if it should be compulsory or voluntary; if there is an evaluation system in order to achieve a correct appreciation; if it should have sanctions for the Practitioner who did not participate at CEP program; and if there should be some kind of equivalency agreement between countries.

In 2004 The ERO-FDI Education WG was running a survey in several countries that gave the first overview of the problem. In 2010 the same group decided to launch a new survey.

The purpose of this paper is to expose the CEP strategy that is being held in each European country and to compare these two surveys.

Methods and Materials

This is a transversal descriptive study

- 1- A questionnaire was sent to 37 European Countries in 2004 and to 43 in 2010. The questionnaires were sent by personal e-mail.**

In 2004 we gathered 34 answers, in 2010 , 33 formulas were fulfilled

In 2010 a reminder was send to the missing countries.

The questions were focused on X main topics

- 2- Should CEP be Mandatory or Voluntary**
- 3- How many hours per years are necessary**
- 4- Is there an evaluation system**
- 5- Are there some kind of sanctions for the practitioners who retrain themselves**
- 6- Who is responsible for the CEP**
- 7- Are there an Equivalency or accreditation for the CEP in foreign countries**
- 8- Would you like in the future some kind of agreement between the European countries**

Data were collected in an Excel file and analyzed.

Results:

On 43 questionnaires only 34 countries send their answers (76 %)

The first question was related to the Status of the CEP; mandatory or voluntary

The data pointed out Mandatory 21 countries

Voluntary 16 countries (fig 1)

The second issue was the hours required

There were big differences on the yearly requirements of the countries.

From 10 hours to 80 hours.

The third question concerned the important issue of evaluation

There is no evaluation system in 16 countries

There exists evaluation system in 10 countries

No answers received from 44% of the countries (Fig 2)

The forth question deled with the possibilities of sanction against practitioner

Who have not fulfilled the CEP?

In 11 countries there are sanctions, in 10 no sanctions (fig 3)

Also in this case 12 countries did not consider these issues.

The fifth points were about the responsibility of the CEP.

In a large majority there was created organism or institution concerning CEP;

Usually after cooperation of the Profession, the University and the Health authority

**The sixth question concerned the existence of an equivalency for foreign CEP
Only in 8 countries; 20 % it was found an equivalency possibility. (Fig 4)
But in answer of the question: are you interested in the future of such a kind
Equivalency the great majority of the countries; 95 % are in favor (Fig 5)**

Discussion

There is a trend in order to achieve a standardization of the Cont.Education systems. Moreover the Dental Association is working hard trying to Obtain a consensus about this important issue.

The role of the ERO is to institute a dialogue and catalyst in this matter