

CME Center of KIMS and its role in CME/CPD in the GCC countries

A review

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Introduction

The Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) established its CME Center in July 2000 following the acceptance of professional development and life-long learning as a national health policy by the Ministry of Health, Kuwait in 1999. At its launch, the CME Program was offered to practitioners in medicine and dentistry as a scheme that they could use on a voluntary basis, although some incentives were built in to encourage participation. Over time, the program has expanded to include pharmacists, and practitioners have since been required to provide evidence of participation in formal CME/CPD activities to administrative authorities when decisions on advancement in careers or continuation of employment were being made. The scheme has also been re-named the MPC Program, the change reflecting the overall aim of CME – the maintenance of professional competence.

CME Providers

At the time Kuwait established its CME Center and launched the MPC Program, formal CME/CPD programs did not exist in most of the countries in the Arabian Gulf region. The majority of the activities that went under the banner of CME were often those that were initiated, sponsored or organized by commercial concerns that had interests in medical or pharmaceutical fields. As a measure aimed at strengthening the premise that formal CME activities should be planned and organized under the authority of recognized academic and scientific establishments or professional bodies, KIMS accredited a number of institutions as CME/CPD Providers under its MPC Program. These are:

1. Faculties and Scientific Committees of KIMS;
2. Health Sciences Faculties of Kuwait University;
3. National level Specialty Divisions of the Ministry of Health, and
4. Health professions associations and their specialty societies.

The overall responsibility for organizing conferences, courses, symposia, seminars and other educational activities for CME accreditation was vested in these CME/CPD Providers.

International Recognition

Within a relatively short time of it being established, the MPC Program received official approval from reputed professional institutions abroad. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada granted substantive recognition to the MPC Program, a position that was re-confirmed subsequently following an extensive review of the documentation and procedures. Additionally, the Royal College of Pathologists in the UK accredited the CME/CPD activities offered by KIMS, stating that it was ready to grant due credit for participation in the KIMS scheme by Members and Fellows working in Kuwait.

MPC Program and Impact in the GCC Countries

The MPC Program evoked considerable interest in the health care establishments in the rest of the countries that comprise the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The favorable attitude with which the program was received by the practitioners in Kuwait itself and the inter-national recognition that it was able to elicit from responsible institutions in North America and the UK, no doubt, would have contributed a great deal to this position.

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GCC Health Ministers' Meetings

A subject that received attention at the GCC Health Ministers meeting held in 2001 was how schemes of life-long learning for health professionals could be designed in all the GCC countries, as had been done with the MPC Program implemented by KIMS in Kuwait. In making a presentation at the meeting, the Secretary General of KIMS outlined the organizational structure and the accreditation procedures for CME/CPD activities. He also highlighted the value of a mechanism for coordinating the planning and implementation of life-long learning programs. The GCC Secretariat subsequently established a Permanent Committee on CME to coordinate continuing medical education in the GCC countries.

Visits of CME/CPD Planners to KIMS

Teams of health care administrators and CME/CPD policy makers from Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have visited KIMS to meet with the administrative authorities responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring the MPC Program. They have held extensive consultations with the Secretary General of KIMS, Director of CME Center and the CME/CPD Officers appointed by KIMS on the different aspects of the MPC Program.

On-Site Consultation Visits to GCC Countries

The Secretary General of KIMS has visited Oman and Qatar following requests by the concerned authorities in the respective countries for consultations on and sharing of the Kuwait experience of planning and implementing a formal CME/CPD scheme.

The Director of the CME Center has been requested by the authorities at the Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman to provide on-site consultative services on how the program that is in operation in Oman could be further developed and a scheme of CME/CPD for GPs could be planned and implemented.

CME/CPD Publications by CME Center

From the inception of the CME Center, KIMS released a wide selection of publications on the role of CME/CPD in the maintenance of professional competence by health professions

and procedures for participating in or organizing CME/CPD activities. This material was made freely available, both as hard copy versions as well as via <www.kims.org.kw>, the website of KIMS and <www.kims.org.kw/cme> that of the CME Center.

The publications were also distributed among the health care administration and health professions training institutions in the member countries of the GCC. This enabled the interested parties to have ready access to information on policies that were pertinent in planning and implementing CME/CPD and life-long learning schemes in the region. Additionally, they constituted a data source for procedures that had been tested in a member country and had been found to be acceptable to the health professional community and feasible for implementation by the administrators. A review of the documentation that the CME/CPD authorities in some of the GCC countries have since made available clearly indicates that the publications released by KIMS have positively influenced and benefited them.

Requests for Accreditation of CME/CPD under MPC Program

The CME Center of KIMS had received specific requests from CME/CPD organizers in Oman and Saudi Arabia for accreditation of activities that were being planned in their own countries to be registered under the MPC Program of KIMS. Such requests had been accommodated under the MPC Program when the activities were being planned under the authority of recognized educational or scientific institutions and satisfied the essential criteria that were used when CME/CPD activities scheduled to be held in Kuwait were registered.

Further reading

1. Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization. *Life-long learning program for health professionals in Kuwait*. Kuwait: Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization; 2007.
2. Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization. *CME Center webpage*. Kuwait: Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization; 2007. Available from: URL: <http://www.kims.org.kw/cme>.
3. Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization. *MPC Program*. Kuwait: Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization; 2006.