# Using webinars to support your continuing professional development

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## Abstract

The transition from face to face to online learning in response to COVD-19 has massively increased the availability of webinars and other online learning experiences whether virtual meetings with colleagues or even the conversion of conferences into a webinar series. This transformation is especially advantageous for organisations whose members are so widespread geographically that regional meetings can be difficult to attend.

## Introduction

Online workshops, lectures, webinars are an essential part of everyday life to support our hobbies, learning in more formal settings or personal development in the workplace. The names given to these online experiences may vary between learning providers and the type of software used for video and audio e.g. Google hangout (<https://hangouts.google.com/>), Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>), Microsoft teams (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>).

However, there are really two main formats to think about; ‘synchronous’ where we are listening live along with everyone else or after the event ‘asynchronous’. Whether you engage with webinars synchronously or asynchronously will depend on your personal circumstances.

Table 1. Benefits of synchronous and asynchronous webinars

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Synchronous | Asynchronous |
| Live engagement with the speaker through Q&A.  Can engage in chat with other viewers who often give different perspectives and ideas/links to follow-up and networking opportunities | Can listen when convenient to you.  Helpful for UK based which occur during your working day or overseas which take place when you are sleeping.  Can listen again as often as you want though may be some restrictions.  Often need to sign up for live event to receive recording link. |

## Choosing a webinar

Many professional organisations have always engaged with online webinars but with the disruptions due to COVID-19 the opportunities that webinars bring has been recognised, in dental nursing by Hylton 2020, Academy of Forensic Nursing (<https://www.facebook.com/events/academy-of-forensic-nursing/elder-abuse-clinical-indicators/177526310305391/>), by software developers with many summits and conferences going digital (<https://www.adobe.com/uk/enterprise/events/webinars.html>). To find possible webinars just try using google and searching for ‘healthcare webinars’ even ‘*your profession* webinars’.

It is key when looking for any continuing professional development (CPD) opportunity to try and find one that fits with your learning needs. It is equally possible just to go out and find something that sounds interesting, but would the webinar really be supporting your CPD? It is valuable to go back to your Personal Development Plan and look to see how you want to develop your knowledge, skills to take the next steps in your career.

In thinking about your development it could be you want to increase your subject knowledge; learn more about dermatological conditions or about diabetic retinopathy; you may want to learn how to increase your skills using InDesign or Lightroom or it could be you have job specific aims. These will be different for clinical photographers, artists, designers or illustrators and team leaders compared to managers.

There are great advantages to webinars in that they are short around about an hour, though some can just be shorter e.g. 30 minutes then Q&A. This is more bite sized learning compared to setting out to tackle a massive open online course (MOOC) or a full online course (Bryson 2017).

The thinking for this Learning and CPD piece is around attending a webinar online but it could equally be you presenting online to support others’ CPD. This is just as much a CPD activity as attending a webinar. There are plenty of learning materials to help you in your endeavours for example Mitchell 2018 and Graham 2020. As they say practice makes perfect so you could test out your webinar within your department first before braving the whole of the Institute of Medical Illustrators (IMI). Do look at advice in general about presenting as these apply equally to online lectures (Bryson 2009).

## Watching, listening and engaging

Lectures have been a means of disseminating information for over a thousand years, if not necessarily the best one. However, in one form or another they are here to stay, though now they are available as webinars or recorded and viewable after the event. What is key is how to engage with the videos or lectures. If I listen too long to a video, I find myself drifting off or missing something and having to rewind. One way to avoid this is by taking notes, so that you are actively engaged while you are listening.

**Step 1: Reflect on the note-taking method you are currently using**

The answer to this might be 'I just take notes', 'I didn't know there were different methods' or you may already have a favourite method.

**Step 2: Look at some methods available online**

If you search in Google for note-taking methods you will see a lot of different techniques, try not to get dazzled. I suggest as a starting point that you use the Lifehack's blog post (<https://www.lifehack.org/856826/note-taking>) or have a search in Wikihow (<https://www.wikihow.com/wikiHowTo?search=note+taking>). Another useful resource is ‘Using lecture recordings: A guide for students’ by Nordmann et al 2018.

There are also a number of study skills books available: *Improve your study skills* (Walmsley, 2010), *Essential study skills for health and social care* (Lloyd and Murphy, 2008) and *Study skills in healthcare* (Taylor, 2003) as well as many others.

**Step 3: Select the methods to try as you listen to an online video or webinar**

I suggest you have a go at those that you feel would suit how you like to learn. It is best not to try them all in one video. If you love mind mapping give that a go, or try out the Cornell method, or the outline method.

**Step 4: Reflect on the note-taking method(s) works for you**

Having used a range of methods, which have you found most effective? Don’t forget, this isn't just about note taking, but reflecting on the method you found helped you the most. Looking back at your notes, which is the best for supporting learning?

## Implementing change

**Step 5: Looking at your notes is there something that you can implement to improve your practice?**

After listening to a webinar or maybe several think about how you can implement what you have learnt. Were you able to discuss and network with colleagues from other regions or countries to see how they undertake that aspect of practice? Is it a change that you can make to your own practice or something than needs to be looked at as a team?

## Reflection on impact

**Step 6: What has developed in your professional practice?**

As with all CPD it isn’t about point scoring, hours or just listing your learning activities. It is looking at the impact on you and your learning, on the improvements in the service you provide to patients and colleagues and how you pass on your learning to others so their practice can develop to better help patients. What are the benefits of your CPD? Rather than describing, reflect on the changes you were able to make in your practice. What changed? Is the change measurable qualitatively or quantitatively?

More information on requirements for CPD audit is available via the Academy for Healthcare Sciences Website (<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/the-register/continuing-professional-development/>) and the Institute of Medical Illustrators website (<https://www.imi.org.uk/resources/education-cpd/continuing-professional-development/>).

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