

NEXt

in Medical Education

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Performance Improvement Individualizes Educational Outcomes

If learning is individualized, then why isn't continuing medical education?

The idea has occurred to the American Medical Association, which now recognizes performance improvement (PI) activities for AMA PRA Category 1 credit. This is the first credit not based on "seat time." Instead of awarding credit based on the amount of time a physician spends in an activity, PI activities award credits in 3 stages:

- Stage A: current practice assessment (5 credits)
- Stage B: application of PI to patient care (5 credits)
- Stage C: evaluation of PI by comparing stage A to B and recording changes or outcomes (5 credits)

A total of 20 credits is awarded for completion of all 3 stages (15 + a bonus 5 credits). In the first phase (stage A), the physician chooses an area of focus based on a gap in knowledge and produces a written assessment of current practice, along with his/her chosen performance measures. In stage B, the physician implements an intervention based on the identified need, using data and tracking tools to support and demonstrate performance change. In the final stage (C), the physician summarizes what was learned (ie, demonstrates performance improvement) by comparing stage A (what was) with what he or she has changed as a result of the learning process.

The PI model can be applied to multiple forms of educational activities. Although it encourages a self-directed learning approach, PI can also be employed to support existing needs or programs. For example, hospitals, medical schools, or societies offering PI for CME could ask the physician learner to focus on a gap in knowledge specific to the practice setting, such as a high-priority quality management issue. A provider also could augment an existing certified activity with a separate PI component, eg, for extra credit as incentive for applying learning to practice.

Industry supporters may find that PI activities directly support their growing need to demonstrate educational results.

Contact Karen Overstreet at Nexus for more information on PI and how to apply it to your educational objectives: (215) 361-6075; next@nexuscominc.com

A Single Standard for CME Providers?

Do all accredited CME providers adhere to equal standards of excellence? Are all CME activities created equal?

Industry has little to go on to make that determination, relying on referrals and whim to guide the selection process. With so many providers to choose from, finding the right one can be a daunting task. However, the National Commission for Certification of Continuing Medical Education Professionals (NC-CME) is trying to relieve some of that anxiety.

The mission of the NC-CME is to establish a national, single standard of certification for CME professionals. Individuals who wish to participate will be required to pass an exam, which they must retake periodically to remain certified. According to NC-CME Executive Director Judy Ribble, who is the CME director for Medscape, the certification is intended to improve patient care and to aid commercial supporters in the process of selecting a CME provider. NC-CME executive committee member Karen Overstreet says, "Certification may help providers and grantors identify good candidates for collaboration because the credential will be awarded to document competency with skill sets identified by CME thought leaders."

The NC-CME is still forming, but once fully established it will be an independent, not-for-profit body. Funding will initially come from employers and charitable organizations, but the NC-CME expects to be self-sustaining in 4 years.

Conference ConNEXtion

Hot Topics: New SOPs for RFPs

Requests for proposals issued by commercial supporters were hot topics at CME conferences this summer. How these documents are changing as a result of the evolving regulatory environment was debated by industry leaders and CME providers in several forums. Here are the highlights:

- Many pharma companies are no longer issuing RFPs for CME projects.
- Supporters that continue to use RFPs to identify providers for educational grants should focus the documents on a therapeutic class or general area of medical need rather than a product.
- RFPs should *not* include objectives or educational messages and should *not* solicit faculty names in the proposal.

Save the Dates—Mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- **October 24–26, Baltimore, MD: Annual Conference of the National Task Force on CME Provider/Industry Collaboration**, Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel. The 16th annual meeting, titled “Practice Strategies for Survival in the Guideline-Rich CME Environment of 2005,” offers exciting interactive plenary and breakout sessions specifically geared towards collaboration between CME providers, industry, the FDA, and accrediting agencies. Faculty will include the leading experts in CME. Noteworthy sessions include “The CME System: Limitations or Opportunities?” led by the ACCME’s Chief Executive Murray Kopelow, MD, MSC, ACCME, and vocal industry critic Arnold Relman, MD, Harvard Medical School. Nexus’ Karen Overstreet, EdD, RPh, FACME, will join Robert Orsetti, MA, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and Steve Vincze, JD, LLM, TAP Pharmaceutical Products, Inc., in leading 2 breakout sessions on honoraria/speaker’s fees. For meeting information, check <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/4455.html> or call Kevin Heffernan at (312) 464-4637.

Annual Alliance for CME Meeting Relocated from New Orleans to San Francisco

- **January 25–28, 2006, San Francisco, CA: 31st Annual Meeting of the Alliance for CME**, Hilton San Francisco. The date is the same, but “The Third Wave of CME: Our Place in Systems Thinking” has changed locations to San Francisco. For information on the program, check the Alliance Web site at <http://www.acme-assn.org> or call (205) 824-1355. Karen Overstreet will serve as chair of this conference.

Would certification be useful for your colleagues to document knowledge and skills relevant to education of physicians? NEXt wants to know your opinions and questions about a single standard of certification for CME professionals. Please send comments to next@nexuscominc.com and we will feature them in forthcoming issues.

Questions or comments?

Please send information, comments, or questions for future issues of NEXt to Karen Overstreet at next@nexuscominc.com.

Don't forget...

Nexus Offers Free CME Lunch-and-Learn

Looking to learn more about CME? Let Nexus bring its expertise to your workplace. All you need to provide is lunch, attendees, and a list of burning questions. Contact Karen Overstreet for more information on how you can benefit from this program: next@nexuscominc.com.

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