

THE WINDS OF CHANGE CONTINUE FOR THE CME COMMUNITY

The updated criteria for CME means there will be an increased emphasis on measuring the outcomes of education.

In recent years, the CME community has demonstrated the ability to manage complex change in the processes related to seeking funding, as well as assuring independence and fair balanced educational content. In 2007 and beyond, the pace of change will accelerate as the entire industry begins to re-examine how, when, and to whom CME is provided.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) recently issued updated accreditation criteria that emphasize the quality of the educational intervention and the impact on the learner's knowledge, attitudes, and, ultimately, on his or her patient care. The goal is to bring CME in line with the movement to improve the quality and safety of the care delivered.

The updated criteria will challenge CME providers and funding sources to reassess their practices, with an aim to maintain a higher level of accountability to the physician learner. CME professionals will need to employ instructional strategies for adult learning that reflect cognizance of the educational content and the knowledge gaps of the target audience, as well as help learners to apply what they learned in their own patient populations.

There must also be an increased emphasis on the measurement of impact or degree of success in achieving objectives. By emphasizing the impact of CME activities on professional practice, the energy is focused on where it belongs: on the physician learners.

This next evolution in CME will challenge all involved:

- Funding sources can expect more complex initiatives and more complex collaborative partnerships to sort through in grant

applications, yet they will still need to match these with their business interests.

- CME providers will find a need for increased professional competence in



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Jan Schultz
Postgraduate Institute for Medicine

TRACKING CME PERFORMANCE

Pharmaceutical companies are still apprehensive to begin tracking the performance and effectiveness of their medical-education efforts, according to Cutting Edge Information's latest research study. **Much of the industry is still skittish about violating anti-kickback laws** or about failing to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), which are designed to ensure that the industry's medical-education investments remain independent from commercial bias.

The report, Pharmaceutical CME: Measuring Program Effectiveness in the Compliance Environment, found that **as companies become more comfortable operating in the new compliance environment, they become more willing to track hard goals.** In fact, a minority of companies consulted in Cutting Edge Information's research indicated that they are considering putting some basic annual objectives in place within by 2008.

"Performance measurement is a sticky subject when you're talking about CME," says Elio Evangelista, senior analyst at Cutting Edge Information. "But to justify the industry's huge expense when supporting continuing medical education, **pharma companies will want to know how effectively their investments are building disease awareness.**"

The study shows that only **24% of participating pharmaceutical companies track return** on investment for their CME activities. Tracking CME performance does not have to interfere with the industry's altruistic investments in medical-education events. For example, one profiled company conducts randomized control trials to test the impact of educational events on physician behaviors, including prescribing habits.

The same report also found that the pharmaceutical industry's spending on CME is set to increase yet again in 2007. In fact, about **70.6% of pharmaceutical companies will increase or at least maintain the same CME spending levels in 2007.** In 2006, CME budgets ranged from as low as \$500,000 to \$65 million, with an **average of \$15.1 million per company; 47.1% of companies increased CME spending** in 2006 compared to 2005 investments. Despite the fact that **29.4% of pharma companies admitted that their CME budgets would decrease in 2007,** many CME providers feared that funding would drop sharply in the coming year.

The study shows that live events continue to dominate most companies' spending. **A majority of surveyed companies' budgets — 78.5% — are allocated toward supporting live events.** Live events not only garner the biggest budget portion, but they also consume the greatest portion of CME executives' time.

Source: Cutting Edge Information, Research Triangle Park. For more information, visit cuttingedgeinfo.com.



This major step forward in the accreditation system positions CME to be viewed as a strategic asset in supporting individual physician competence.

Michael Lemon
Postgraduate Institute for Medicine

designing educational strategies that focus on the physician learner and an in depth understanding of quality improvement within healthcare.

- Healthcare organizations, teaching institutions, hospitals, and managed care organizations may find that forming collaborative relationships with other organizations can drive improvements in physician competency and overall patient care.
- Physician learners will find that they have more choices in self directing their continuing professional development, and many of those choices will not resemble formal CME as we know it today.

The greatest potential benefit the criteria bring is an improved quality of education that more closely aligns the CME enterprise to the other quality improvement forces within healthcare, such as evidence-based medicine, maintenance of certification, licensure maintenance, and pay-for-performance. This major step forward positions CME to be viewed as a strategic asset in supporting individual physician competence and improvements in the quality and safety of healthcare.

Source: Jan Schultz, RN, MSN, Director, Education Outcomes and Accreditation, and Michael R. Lemon, President, Postgraduate Institute for Medicine. Postgraduate Institute for Medicine, Englewood, Colo., which is accredited by ACCME and ACPE and is an approved provider of continuing nursing education, focuses exclusively on partnering with nonaccredited organizations to jointly sponsor CME/CE activities. For more information, visit pimed.com. ♦

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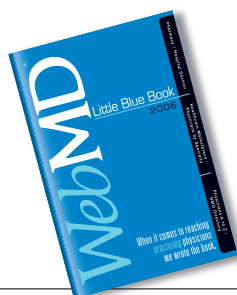
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