

Nevada State Medical Association, 3660 Baker Lane #101, Reno, Nevada 89509
(775) 825-6788

Closing the Practice Gap

A new term presented at the recent CME workshops was, *physician practice gap*. When used by the CME Committee, this term helps to identify the physicians targeted by the educational activity and establishes the specific educational needs of that target audience. CME Committees, during initial discussions of each CME activity, should be asking: *What is the practice gap we are trying to close or eliminate in this target audience?* After the practice gap is identified, the rest falls into place. Learning objectives are easy to create, the speaker has the information to develop the content of the presentation, and the CME activity can be evaluated in terms of changes in physician competence, physician performance, or patient outcomes.

CME Committees versus Planning Committees

A recent trend among accredited CME providers is in the formation of planning committees to plan CME activities. The perceived benefit by the CME Committee is that the CME activity is planned by those who are most knowledgeable about the subject. However, the use of planning committees is prohibited by NSMA policy. The reason for this policy is to maintain the integrity of the CME Committee. The CME Committee is an active, working group that is responsible for the continuing medical education produced by the organization for the physician target audience. By delegating planning responsibilities, the CME Committee does not maintain its purpose and becomes a rubber stamp for CME activities planned by others.

Regularly Scheduled Conferences and Courses

CME Committees and CME coordinators are often confused about the differences between a *regularly scheduled conference* and a *course*. The easiest way to differentiate is based on three areas: the target audience, the topics, and the learning objectives. It is a regularly scheduled conference if the CME activities are targeted toward a specialty physician group, the topics for all the CME activities are related to one subject, and the learning objectives can be written in broad terms that will encompass all CME activities under that topic. Tumor Boards and case conferences are examples of regularly scheduled conferences. It is a course when presentations are targeted to most or all physicians identified in the CME mission, the topics vary across a wide range of subject areas, and each CME activity has a separate and distinct subject and learning objectives. A course may be a single CME activity or presentations made on a regular basis (e.g., weekly, monthly, or quarterly), sometimes called potpourri or grand rounds.

Target Audience for CME Activities

Each CME activity should be designed to close the practice gaps of the physician target audience identified in the CME mission. As described in the Closing the Practice Gap section above, the CME Committee determines the practice gap and identifies the target audience at the start of the activity planning process. CME activities can be planned for all physicians in the target audience or for specialty physicians within the target audience. However, CME activities can never be planned for physicians who are not a part of the target audience identified in the CME mission.