



Personal & Professional Growth Continuing Medical Education

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Welcome to this podcast by *Doctor's Digest*, bridging the gap between the BUSINESS of Medicine and the PRACTICE of Medicine with single-topic manuals that provide practice solutions from the experts.

Almost every state in the country requires physicians to complete a certain number of hours of continuing medical education, or CME, in order to maintain their medical license. But CME is important for another reason, too: it offers you a chance to stay clinically current, challenged, and invigorated. The current issue of *Doctor's Digest*, entitled "Personal and Professional Growth," offers the following information about how to make CME a convenient and helpful addition to your professional life.

First—a word about what makes good CME. According to the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, better known as the ACCME, there are three basic quality criteria. One, CME should contribute to patient safety and practice improvement. It should directly impact the quality of patient care. Two, it should be based on valid content. Obviously, it should not promote treatment or recommendations that pose risks or dangers that outweigh benefits, or those that are known to be ineffective. Third, it should be independent of commercial interest. It should not in any way be influenced by a pharmaceutical company, a medical device manufacturer, or any other commercial interest.

Today, going online is one of the most convenient ways to acquire CME credits—and this approach is getting more and more popular. One expert observes that there are currently over three hundred Websites offering more than twenty-six thousand CME Category-one hours for physicians! Just ten years ago, there were only thirteen.

Online CME offerings are fairly heavily weighted toward primary care; however, specialty and sub-specialty courses are also available. And you may be surprised by the versatility of the course offerings. In addition to strictly clinical learning, some sites offer courses in medical ethics, practice management, legal issues, and risk management.

CME doesn't have to cost you anything. Most online providers offer free CME hours. Others may charge a modest registration fee ranging from five dollars to twenty-five dollars per credit hour.

The ACCME maintains strict standards for separating medical education from commercial sponsorship. For example, pharmaceutical and medical device companies cannot place accredited educational activities directly on their corporate Websites. And CME sites cannot reference commercial sponsorship on the pages that physicians visit to acquire their hours.

Teaching methods vary widely from site to site. You may find text with or without graphics, slide shows, audio, video, interactive case-based lessons, Q-and-A, and even learning games. Podcasts are becoming increasingly available. As one expert put it, the more varied sensory input you have to stimulate your brain, the more likely you are to learn. Whether you choose online CME or the kind you can access at a specialty meeting or clinical conference, CME is an increasingly interesting way not only to keep current, but to enhance your patient care.

For more tips and ideas to enhance your Personal and Professional Growth, please see the November/December 2007 issue of Doctor's Digest.

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