
**Professional Society Roundtable
Discussion Paper
July 25, 2011**

A strategic component for accelerating health care performance improvement efforts is continuing education. In July 2010, a professional society roundtable was convened to initiate strategic conversations around key topic areas. As a result of the work generated during this meeting, a second roundtable of professional societies was convened by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners on July 25, 2011, to continue the focus on responsibilities of professional societies/associations for accreditation and providing continuing education for their membership/disciplines for the purposes of:

1. Identifying principles and best practices in continuing education.
2. Discussing current relationships between professional societies / associations and educational partners in order to make recommendations for selecting and working with education partners.
3. Discussing the business model of annual conferences in terms of the potential overdependence by associations on industry revenue

Individuals representing the following societies/association were in attendance at the meeting, held in Chicago.

American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, AANP

American Academy of Physician Assistants, AAPA

American College of Chest Physicians, ACCP

American College of Nurse Practitioners, ACNP

American Osteopathic Family Physicians, AOFPP

California Academy of Family Physicians, CAFFP

Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association, GAPNA

Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners, MICNP

National Association of Pediatric NPs, NAPNAP

National Association of Women's Health NPs, NPWH

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association, PCNA

Society of Hospital Medicine, SHM

Jane Dowling, PhD, Wellington Consulting Group facilitated the meeting.

This document summarizes the discussions conducted during the meeting and is designed for dissemination to members of each of the societies represented at the roundtable as well as other parties interested in the discussion topics. The purpose of this paper is to provide a preliminary draft of recommended guidelines and best practices for use by attending

societies / associations and other interested parties. The discussion paper developed after the first Roundtable can be accessed at: <http://www.aanp.org/NR/rdonlyres/1CA03410-5824-4123-80CF-130DA5245522/0/ProfessionalSocietyRoundtableDiscussionPaper.pdf> .

Discussion: Best Practices in Continuing Education

The purpose of this session was to focus attention on current responsibilities of professional societies / associations in attendance for accredit and providing continuing education to their memberships. Intent also was to identify and promulgate “good practice” in continuing education programs and activities. The intent of the attendees was to begin the process of producing useful guidelines that can be adapted locally for use with the individual learners that the various societies/associations serve. The preliminary set of principles reflect those used with adult learners and are designed for use in any type of program of personal interest to the learner, or for professional development, training, or credentialing. The principles can also be used as a guideline for sponsors of continuing education and training in selecting vendors of continuing education programs /activities. Six themes were identified: Learning Needs, Learning Outcomes, Learning Experience, Assessment of Learning Outcomes, Administration, and Industry Relationships.

LEARNING NEEDS

Principle: Providers of continuing education should utilize a process to assess learning needs that is multi-faceted, continuous, based on data, and directly related to practice gaps.

Amplifications:

1. The process should use a variety of sources for identifying and assessing learning needs such as literature, membership surveys, reported knowledge and practice gaps, and practice level data.
2. The provider should develop a strategic direction for design of educational activities that relies on the assessed learning needs.
3. The process used in assessing learning needs should be ongoing and continuous to capture current changes in the medical and learning environments.

Discussion:

While a continuing education program may originate from a variety of sources, it is critical that a determination be made of whether a need exists. The need should be determined directly from identified gaps and based on data. There is a need to train those individuals and organizations submitting ideas for continuing education to identify in their written submissions those gaps and to provide the supporting data to justify the provision of the program or activity. It is recommended that this submission be a requirement before any program is approved for development. It is also imperative that providers have a strategic direction for the design of educational activities that specifies the utilization of learning needs assessment data in the development of any activity. This requires an organized structure such as an educational oversight committee to process and review submissions prior to approval and implementation, ensuring that the educational program is based on assessed learning needs.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Principle: The continuing education program provider has clear and concise written statements of intended learning outcomes for the continuing education program / activity

Amplifications:

1. The statements of intended learning outcomes utilize terms that are (1) concise and (2) focus on intended change in learners' knowledge, skills, and practice during or after completion of the program/activity rather than on the content coverage.
2. The statements of intended learning outcomes are assessable and are related directly to the ongoing learning needs assessment process.
3. Learning outcome statements specify the performance level at which the learner should be able to express or demonstrate intended changes in knowledge, skills, or attitude in practice.
4. The learning outcome can be accomplished by learners in settings other than the learning environment (e.g., practice) after completion of the program/activity.

Principle: Professional societies / associations should implement a comprehensive system of evaluating the outcomes of overall education, consistent with the identified needs

Amplifications:

1. The learning outcomes are arranged in a recognizable and logical sequence from entry level to exit level with identifiable benchmarks.
2. The evaluation of the learning outcomes is aligned with and contributes to the professional society's strategic direction and the needs of its overall membership and related discipline.
3. The evaluation of the learning outcomes should include a multifaceted and iterative design where data and trends are analyzed over time.
4. The evaluation of learning outcomes should be aligned with the ongoing needs assessment process.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Principle: Program content, instructional, and delivery processes must be effective, relevant and timely for achieving intended learning outcomes and are based on recognized adult learning principles.

Amplifications:

1. Access to applicable resources for the educational topic should be provided to accommodate the range of learners.
2. Needs assessments should be conducted on a regular basis to identify learning style and preference as well as the varying needs of individuals who are in specialty societies.
3. Training should be provided to instructors, speakers, and/or educational leaders on using resources applicable to the topic.
4. There should be recognition of the need for supplemental learning opportunities in those instances where new data has emerged in a content area or where there is a general need for updates on a topic.

Principle:

Instructional continuing education staff are qualified by education or experience to provide quality instruction in the relevant subject matter area.

Amplifications:

1. The instructor, speaker, or educational leader of the learner group is competent in the subject-matter area based on work experience, formal education or training, publications, recognition by peers, and/or professional credentials.
2. The instructor, speaker, or educational leader should have completed any requirements for the course that they are teaching or leading.

3. Adequate support services including faculty development, basic leadership training, training on educational technology, and continuous improvement should be available and used for faculty.
4. Focus group should be conducted periodically with faculty and staff to evaluate programs.
5. The instructor, speaker, or educational leader should be able to plan learning experiences and to provide the evidence that they use data.

Principle: Learning experiences are designed to facilitate the role of the learner and are organized in such a manner as to provide for appropriate continuity, sequencing, and integration of the program/activity to achieve the specified learning outcomes.

Amplifications:

1. Learning experiences are designed to promote active learner participation and to provide feedback to learners regarding their progress.
2. The design of the learning experiences is organized to provide reiteration of and/or emphasis on major concepts and skills, while incorporating new or updated data/ findings/ procedures that impact previous learning outcomes.
3. Learning experiences are organized to permit learners to advance from simple to more complex levels of development.

Principle: The statements of intended learning outcomes of a continuing education activity determine the selection of instructional strategies, materials, media and other learning technology, and to create an appropriate learning environment.

Amplifications:

1. The learning activities and strategies of the program / activity are selected to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
2. Learning technology and media are used and geared to the implicit type of performance or outcome to be achieved.
3. The learning environment is selected and created to enhance the achievement of learning outcomes.
4. Appropriate instructional aids, equipment, and reference materials are accessible, consistent with intended learning outcomes.

Principle: The physical environment for the continuing education program/activity is conducive to learning.

Amplifications:

1. The physical facilities are appropriate and consistent with intended learning objectives.
2. The physical facilities are adequate to accommodate the size of the audience and to promote learning.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Principle: Continuing education programs / activities are evaluated through assessment of learners' performance in terms of the identified learning outcomes.

Amplifications:

1. The assessment techniques or strategies used should support determination of whether or not the stated learning outcomes are being or were achieved.
2. Learners are provided with means to evaluate the continued education experience from their perspective.

3. Faculty professional development should be provided regarding the assessment of learning outcomes, including what is being measured and what measurement is being used.
4. A comprehensive plan for assessment of learning outcomes should be developed by the provider including a follow-up component for measuring impact on practice, when possible.
5. Data on the extent to which the activity resulted in the anticipated learning outcomes is used, in conjunction with collaborative evaluation by learners, instructors, and others, to make modifications when they are deemed necessary or appropriate.

ADMINISTRATION

Principle: Each continuing education provider has a clearly stated, written statement of its mission, which is available to the publics served.

Amplifications:

1. Support of the continuing education guiding principles are evident in the mission statement of the organization and in the actions of upper administration.
2. Policy statements clearly separate the revenue and educational objectives of the annual conference.

Principle: Support from upper level administration is demonstrated with support through appropriate, sufficient, and stable *human, fiscal, and physical* resources to provide quality programs/activities over an extended period of time.

Amplification:

1. Beyond the administration of specific programs, support from upper level administration should be evident through the provision of resources and sufficient budget for continuing education.

Principle: The continuing education provider's promotion and advertising provide full and accurate disclosures about its programs, services, fees, and sponsors.

Amplification:

1. The continuing education provider practices truth in advertising.

Principle: The continuing education provider ensures the maintenance of a set of limited access, permanent records of participants and the provision of documentation for accurate, readily available transcripts.

Amplification:

1. Accurate participation records are maintained with sufficient documentation to meet the need of the continuing education participant and the provider.

Principle: The continuing education provider ensures that appropriate quality control systems are in place and in use within its organization.

Amplification:

1. Quality control is maintained relevant to all aspects of the continuing education activity, beginning with identifying learning needs and continuing with determining intended learning outcomes, providing appropriate learning experiences, systematically assessing learner performance, as well as the various elements of the activity as a whole.

INDUSTRY / COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Principle: In order to protect the public's health and safety from potential bias, independence from commercial influence must be ensured and maintained.

Amplifications:

1. The Standards of Commercial Support (SCS) should apply to all continuing education programs / activities, regardless of whether or not external funding is relevant.
2. The entire educational process must be independent of the influence of industry, from the selection of topics, design, and audience through the evaluation of outcomes.
3. Needs should be based solely on the learner.
4. Associations should be willing to share all details of any grant funding or proposals that are awarded.
5. Providers of continuing education should be responsible for planning and conducting their work consistent with proper methodologies and standards to ensure accountability and transparency over public activities, meeting their legal mandate and fulfilling their responsibilities in a complete and objective manner.
6. Commission-based grant development should be avoided.
7. Policies and procedures should be developed that outline limitations of contact with industry during grant discussions.

Discussion:

Relationships between Professional Societies/Associations & Educational Partners

The purpose of this session was to discuss current relationships between professional societies / associations and their educational partners, in development of continuing education and to make recommendations for selecting and working with education partners. During the discussion, the group reviewed a document developed by the Pharmaceutical Alliance for Continuing Medical Education (PACME), "Choosing Educational Partners – Keys to Successful CME Collaboration." Discussants recommended that when considering entering into partnerships with new or existing partners, professional societies consider both the entity's operational resources and educational experience, to optimize the likelihood of anticipated outcomes. The following represents a minor adaptation of criteria and recommendations based on the PACME document, to be used as a checklist by societies/ associations in selecting educational vendors or partners.

Operations

Administration

- Corporate, staffing, and organizational structure of the organization maintain separation between marketing/advertising programs and education
- Number, credentials, and specialty of personnel support expertise in editing, project management skills, educational programming, etc.
 - Demonstrated expertise in therapeutic area(s) and teaching modality(ies) of interest
 - Demonstrated ability to collaborate with multiple stakeholders
 - Demonstrated ability to meet or beat established deadlines

Financial

- Evidence of operational capabilities including maintenance of necessary level of documentation and records necessary to evaluate and substantiate expenses associated with an educational activity
- Demonstrated financial history of successful funding, without indication of previous bankruptcies or current potential for cash flow problems

Compliance Program

- Appropriate written policies and procedures concerning specific risk areas including:
 - Firewall structure and integrity
 - Communication channels
 - Appropriate communication and levels of responsiveness
 - Investigation and response to feedback and/or complaints
 - Ongoing and periodic assessment for compliance
- Appropriate procedures to manage corrective action
- Mechanism for resolving conflict of interest issues

Professionalism

- Service to the CME/CE community
 - Active participation in relevant organizations (ACME/MECCA, NAAMECC, others)
 - Employees holding leadership positions in service organizations

Educational Framework

Adult Learning Principles

- Evidence of application of adult learning principles throughout the educational design process

Accreditation

- Current accreditation status; number and type of accreditations held from various agencies (provider or individual programs)
- The results of recent assessments and a review of past and pending complaints received
- List of accredited or accrediting partners

Educational Design

- Planning reflects input from multiple stakeholder/sources to address the following questions or issues from their individual perspectives:
 - Internal and external transparency
 - Identification of healthcare practice gaps
 - Existence of clinical data to satisfy educational needs
 - Identification of learning objectives required for understanding and improving delivery of care
 - Identification of target audiences: by discipline, setting, specialty, etc.
 - Methods to communicate the educational learning objectives by type of audience
 - Definition of success/outcomes
 - Identification of remaining educational gaps post-activity

Assessment of learning and behavioral change

- Demonstrated ability to generate practical and cost-effective outcomes data
- Appropriate measurement of knowledge gained and/or applied, with behavioral change as appropriate (e.g. provider behavior, patient outcomes, intent to change)

Discussion: Business Model of Annual Conferences

During the third facilitated session, participants discussed the business model of annual conferences in terms of the actual or potential overdependence of many associations on industry revenue. It was recommended that professional societies /associations use the Code for Interactions with Companies* developed by The Council for Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS), in evaluating their conference models. The Code was developed and adopted by CMSS to reinforce core principles to maintain actual and perceived independence. “The Council of Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS) believes every Society must be sure its interactions with Companies meet high ethical standards. Societies’ interactions with Companies may include receiving charitable contributions, applying for grants in support of programmatic activities, and conducting a range of business transactions. In all of these interactions, Societies are committed to acting with integrity and transparency. CMSS adopts this Code to reinforce the core principles that help them maintain actual and perceived independence. Adopting this Code helps to ensure that a Society’s interactions with Companies will be for the benefit of patients and members and for the improvement of care in our respective specialty fields.”

Roundtable participants recommended professional societies / associations review Section IV, Principles for Interaction, in the Code, which includes principles and guidelines for Independence, Transparency, Accepting Charitable Contributions, Accepting Corporate Sponsorships, Society Meetings, Society Educational and Informational Programs, CME-Accredited Satellite Symposia, Company Informational/Educational Programs, Exhibits, and Awarding of Research Grants. While not all of the participants’ organizations have endorsed the CMSS Code, all participants spoke in support of the importance of the principles and guidelines described. Furthermore, the Code’s glossary of terms was discussed as providing clarity to terms such as product theater, satellite symposia, promotional educational events / presentations, exhibits, etc.

It was agreed by the Roundtable participants that there is a need to do major membership and staff training on the new guidelines for sponsorship of annual conference. For instance, it was suggested that a page be included in the conference program to explain the terms and what guidelines/policies are in place for each type of event. It was also recommended that societies / associations provide industry with the actual guidelines that should be followed for each type of event.

It was stressed that societies/ associations must continually examine how they are planning their educational programs to determine whether the program is being driven by the availability of funding, as opposed to formal needs assessment. They should also evaluate potential alternatives to industry support of programs, including charging for educational programs and increasing the number of cost-effective online education programs to support members’ educational needs without industry sponsorship.

**The Code can be accessed at <http://www.cmss.org/codeforinteractions.aspx>. The signers of the Code can also be accessed at this link. Non-member societies are welcome to sign on to the Code.*

The Professional Society Roundtable has provided a unique opportunity for representatives of multiple disciplines to discuss principles and best practices in continuing education, along six themes: learning needs, learning outcomes, learning experience, assessment of learning outcomes, administration, and industry relationships. Further discussion included issues regarding relationships between professional societies and educational partners and the business model of annual conferences in terms of dependence on industry revenue.