

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION IN JAMAICA

It was worthwhile establishing a formal mechanism for Continuing Medical Education (CME) in Jamaica because:

- There is evidence that continuing educational activities that are properly organised and undertaken assist participating physicians in carrying out their professional responsibilities efficiently and effectively;
- There should be a mechanism in Jamaica to ensure that all practising physicians participate and to assure physicians and the public that the educational activities meet acceptable standards;
- This mechanism will include or will be linked to requirements for rectifying physicians and therefore must include systems for accreditation and for monitoring physicians' participation.

A mechanism was therefore proposed based on the establishment of a National Council for Continuing Medical Education (NCCME).

Definitions

The term sponsor as used in this paper applies to an institution or organisation offering CME activities. When used in this context it does not apply to any person, institution or organisation providing commercial support for CME. One of the functions of the National Council for Continuing Medical Education will be to develop standards for the relationship between sponsors and the sources of financial support.

The accreditation process described here applies to CME activities of sponsors, and not to any other educational activities in which they may be engaged (e.g. medical undergraduate or postgraduate training), nor to the accreditation of an individual (e.g. to practise medicine). In this context accreditation applies to a series of CME activities, and not to individual CME activities. These activities will be developed in accordance with the policies and standards defined by the National Council for Continuing Medical Education.

National Council for Continuing Medical Education

Aim

The aim of the National Council for Continuing Medical Education (NCCME) is to promote the development of the principles, policies and standards for CME, relating CME to health care and all aspects of medical education; to apply these principles, policies and standards to the accreditation of sponsors (that is, institutions and organisations offering CME); and to deal with other matters related to CME.

Structure

The NCCME will comprise:

- Three representatives of the Medical Council of Jamaica, one of whom will be the Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus;
- One representative each of the Medical Association of Jamaica, The Jamaica Chapter of the Caribbean College of Family Physicians, and of any other Association or Society of physicians in Jamaica which has a clearly defined Constitution and which has the education of physicians as one of its primary aims.

The **Chair** of the NCCME will be one of the representatives of the Medical Council of Jamaica, and must be fully registered to practise in Jamaica.

The NCCME will meet at least twice annually, depending on the business that it has to undertake from time, but most of its functions (see below) will be delegated to an Executive Committee comprising:

- The Chair
- A deputy Chair (elected from and by the general membership)

- Three other members of the NCCME elected by its members, one of whom will also serve as Secretary to the NCCME and to the Executive Committee.

Other people may be co-opted as nonvoting members from time to time by the Executive Committee to help it in its work.

All members of the Executive Committee must be fully registered to practise medicine in Jamaica. The Executive Committee will meet at least four times annually depending on its activities.

Functions

The functions of the NCCME are to:

- Serve as an accrediting body for sponsors;
- Recommend to its member institutions and organisation policies for review and evaluation of sponsors;
- Recommend and initiate studies for improving the organisation and processes of CME;
- Promote the development of methods for evaluating CME, particularly its relationship to health care and other aspects of medical education;
- Review and assess developments in CME;
- Review periodically its role in CME to ensure that it remains responsive to public and professional needs.

The Executive Committee will be the executing arm of the NCCME. It will:

- Receive, review and report to the NCCME on applications from sponsors for accreditation, including its recommendations in each case;

- Examine and report to the NCCME on disputes involving accredited sponsors (and, if requested, on disputes involving non-accredited sponsors);
- Examine and make recommendations to the NCCME for changes in policies and standards for accreditation.

The executive Committee will organise site visits, when necessary, as part of the processing of applications for accreditation. This includes identification of the people who will do the site visit (from a panel approved by the NCCME).

Specialists Societies may request variations in the policies to accommodate their missions and objectives, whilst not compromising the general policies for accreditation. These requests will be examined in the first place by the Executive Committee, which will/may make recommendations to the NCCME based on its review.

CME Activities

There is a wide range of CME activities, and two main categories are widely recognised. One of the categories includes structured programmes of learning activities that are organised by accredited sponsors (lectures, seminars, workshops; experiences based on the use of enduring materials or journals combined with the self-assessment), or that are readily measurable (e.g. graduate study in appropriate health fields and/ or passing examinations recognised for this purpose). The second category includes unstructured learning experiences that are, in general, designated as such by physicians themselves, or by accredited sponsors under special circumstances.

The two categories recognised by the American Medical Association are listed in the Appendix. Similar lists have been produced by other bodies; for example, the Caribbean College of Family Practitioners. One of the NCCME's functions will be to draw up lists applicable to Jamaica.

Mechanism for Recertification

The NCCME will draw up guidelines for accrediting sponsors, which will include:

- The Sponsor's mission statement
- Evidence that the CME is based on perceived or demonstrated educational need, that the educational objectives are stated and that the content, teaching and learning methods and techniques are appropriate.
- Evaluation mechanisms are defined to assess the quality of the activity and its relevance to the stated needs and objectives
- Documentation by the sponsors of physicians' participation

The NCCME will also determine the minimum number of hours in each main CME category it recognises that will be required for recertification by the Medical Council of Jamaica.

Physicians will be responsible for preparing their own documents to apply for recertification. They will depend on the accredited sponsors of activities in which they have participated to provide the appropriate confirmatory documents for those activities, but an "honour system" will exist for the other activities.

American Medical Association Physicians Recognition Award Categories

Category 1

Formal learning activities by accredited sponsors

Lectures, seminars, workshops

Enduring materials (e.g. audio-visual; computer materials)

Journals

International conferences

Passing recertification examinations

Participation in AGGME-accredited programmes

Study leading to a medically related degree

Other activities

Category 2

Formal learning activities by accredited sponsors

Lectures, seminars, workshops, not recognised as Category 1

Not enduring materials

Physicians Designated

Consultations with peers and medical experts

Developing and reviewing quality assessment data

Use of electronic databases in patient care

Use of enduring materials

Small group discussions

Self-assessment activities

Journal club activities not designated Category 1

Teaching health professionals (but not editing)

Teleconferences

Preceptorships

Lectures, seminars and workshops not designated for credit

(Document modified from original July 2013)