So You Want CME Credit for your Program?  
Here's What You Need to Know

Who Decides What Gets CME?

Carondelet Health Network (CHN) is accredited by the Arizona Medical Association (ArMA) to provide Continuing Medical Education (CME) for physicians. ArMA in turn is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME). What does that mean? It means CHN does not make the rules! The programs that do and don't qualify for CME credit are determined largely by the requirements of a national governing body, not by CHN or its CME Committee and coordinator.

The CME Philosophy

From 2006 to 2008, new guidelines for CME were rolled out across the country. Briefly, CME must strive to improve physician competence, physician performance, or patient outcomes. Notice "knowledge" is not mentioned. Knowledge must lead to Change. Also, CME content must not be biased toward any commercial interest, such as a pharmaceutical company or medical equipment company.

What does that mean for you? It means your program must address a real problem or issue dealt with by the physicians attending, and you must have documentation (preferably data) to demonstrate that need. It also means if you expect commercial interests to contribute toward the cost of your program, you must follow some very strict guidelines in soliciting, spending, and acknowledging that contribution. Read on!

Practice Gap

Your activity must address a "Practice Gap." The Practice Gap is best expressed by asking these two questions: What is the state of the practice today? (For instance, "Not all high-risk patients are screened for PAD.") And what should be the state of the practice? ("All high-risk patients should be screened for PAD.") This demonstrates a gap between current competence, performance, or outcomes and the ideal state. But if you don't get it, don't worry—our CME coordinator are available to help you identify and state your Practice Gap. We speak CME!

Advertising

Before you send that save-the-date card for your program, talk to us. You cannot use the term CME anywhere in your advertising until credit has been approved by the CHN CME Committee. Once your program is approved for CME credit, the accreditation statement must be used whenever learning objectives and program topics are given. Best to let us review your materials.
Documentation

CHN must provide ArMA with documentation demonstrating our compliance with all the requirements for CME established by the ACCME. This takes lots of paperwork, so we have plenty of forms for you to fill out. Some of them look daunting, but there are lots of checkboxes and lists to choose from, making the pages fly by. Our CME coordinator will answer any questions you have and work with you to collect all the necessary information on these forms.

Target Audience

CME programs are aimed at MDs and DOs. While we understand that others such as DPMs and FNPs can use the AMA credits, ArMA does not consider them an appropriate target audience.

What About the Money?

If you plan to ask commercial interests to provide funds for your program, you need to read CHN's Policy on the Commercial Support of CME. Really. It explains what you can and cannot do when soliciting and expending commercial funds. For instance, a commercial interest cannot pay directly for meals or honoraria; support must be in the form of an educational grant to CHN. Vendor booths can be offered at a fixed price, but you can't give a company a free booth because they gave you a grant. And there's more, so you really need to read the policy.

Also, you must charge a reasonable fee for your program, to avoid violating Stark guidelines. Please contact the CME coordinator to discuss.

Provider

CHN is the Provider of all programs where we grant CME. If another institution or practice is involved, that is considered "Joint Provider." CHN does not do joint providership activities. This does not preclude contracting with a third-party educational consultant for programming.

How Do I Start?

We have an official document we'll give you on the Process to Request CME, but here's the skinny: The earlier you involve the CME coordinator, the less trouble you'll have making your program qualify for CME. We ask activity planners to submit their application 90-120 days ahead of their event. For small, in-house conferences, we can shorten that turnaround time quite a bit; for large conferences desiring commercial support, six months is a better timeline. Many commercial interests require 90 days to process a grant application for funding.

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