

The State Board of Medicine's CME Requirements  
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Following the lead of most other states, the Pennsylvania Board of Medicine now requires that physicians participate in continuing medical education (CME) in order to practice in the state. This mandate is a result of Act 13 (the M-Care legislation) passed by the legislature in March, 2002, with the CME provision included as one of the initiatives to promote patient safety. For license renewal in Fall, 2006 physicians will be required to attest that they have completed the following CME between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2006:

- At least 100 CME credits, 20 of which must be in Category 1. The remaining 80 hours may be in Category 1 or 2.
- At least 12 credits in the area of patient safety and risk management. These may be either Category 1 or 2 and may be used to satisfy the overall 100 hour requirement.

UPMC physicians must be aware of the state's requirements and should begin preparing for the upcoming renewal in Fall, 2006. Over the last year, physicians have asked us a number of questions about the regulations:

*Is anyone exempt from the requirements?*

The state requirements list the following exemptions:

- First time licensees.
- Physicians holding training licenses.
- Retired physicians providing care only to immediate family members.
- Physicians on inactive status.
- Those granted hardship waivers under circumstances such as serious illness or military service. Physicians wishing to obtain a waiver must apply in writing to the Board of Medicine. These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

*What are the options for obtaining CME credit to meet this year's requirements?*

Physicians should review all of the CME activities that they have attended since January 1, 2005 and decide if they wish to use Category 1 or Category 2 credits to satisfy the requirement. The reappointment standards of many hospitals include participation in CME, with the total hours required frequently meeting or exceeding the state's expectations.

There are many opportunities for obtaining Category 1 credit, including web-based and other types of self study activities, grand rounds at local hospitals, and formal courses. It is important for physicians to remember to register at these programs to assure that CME credits are recorded. Another option for Category 1 credit is completion of board re-certification or an advanced medical degree. These credits can be obtained through direct application to the

AMA (pages 16 and 17 of the PRA handbook, <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/pr2006.pdf>).

Category 2 credit is self-declared and may include reading journal articles; consultation with colleagues; and teaching residents, medical students, and other health professionals. Further information about Category 2 credit can be found on page 18 of the 2006 AMA PRA handbook (<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/pr2006.pdf>).

*What activities qualify for the patient safety/risk management requirement?*

Although it will be relatively easy for physicians to satisfy the total number of CME hours required, many questions have been raised about what types of activities qualify for the patient safety and risk management provision. The state regulations list the following types of activities that are relevant to this category:

- Improving medical records and record keeping
- Reducing medical errors
- Professional conduct and ethics
- Improving communications
- Preventative medicine
- Healthcare quality improvement.

Since there is no formal mechanism designed by the Board of Medicine to determine which CME activities qualify for the patient safety/risk management requirements, it is the responsibility of the individual physician to determine what CME activities to designate in this area. Again, it should be remembered that Category 2 credits *will* be accepted.

*What resources are available for meeting the patient safety/risk management requirement?*

Physicians who require credits in the risk management/patient safety area have many options for meeting the state mandate. The Center for Continuing Education in the Health Sciences currently certifies a number of quality improvement committees across the UPMC and is willing to consider certification of any additional recurring meetings that contain an educational component. A number of formal courses have patient safety-related topics and others are totally devoted to these issues (<https://ccehs.upmc.edu/formalCourses.jsp>). Over 20 relevant web modules can be also accessed at <http://cme.health.pitt.edu>. For those with limited Internet access, video tapes can be obtained by contacting the Center at 412-647-8232.

Many resources for patient safety/risk management education are available from other CME providers. The Pennsylvania Medical Society produces several excellent publications such as *Consult* and *intouch* that are available to members through the PMS web site (<http://www.pamedsoc.org>). The Agency for Health Care Research and Quality also offers case studies on a variety of patient safety issues (<http://webmm.ahrq.gov>).

*What level of documentation needs to be submitted with the license renewal?*

The application for re-licensure merely asks if you have met the CME requirement. The only response required is a simple “yes” or “no”. There is no need to submit a list of CME activities that you have attended with the annual license renewal.

*How will the state verify completion of the CME requirement?*

In Spring, 2007, the state will audit a sample of physicians to obtain verification of CME attendance. Those selected for the audit will be required to submit documentation of their CME activities.

*What kinds of CME records should physicians maintain?*

The state regulations provide a variety of alternatives by which physicians can document participation in CME activities:

- AMA PRA certificates distributed following completion of a CME activity.
- Credit transcripts provided by accredited CME organizations.
- Certificates provided by state medical societies (such as the Pennsylvania Medical Society) or specialty societies that verify and document CME attendance.
- Credentialing records of hospitals or third party payers.

The Center for Continuing Education offers on-line credit transcripts (<https://ccehs.upmc.edu/credit-transcripts.asp>) containing records of attendance at all activities certified by the center. Physicians can also enter information about attendance at activities certified by other providers. CCEHS web modules feature a certificate of completion that can be printed on demand.

Documentation of participation in Category 2 activities can include personal log books, diaries, or journal notes describing the nature of the learning intervention.

In terms of the patient safety/risk management requirements, physicians should maintain sufficient documentation to indicate that the learning activity meets the spirit of general subject areas defined by the state. Course brochures, transcripts, or certificates listing specific topics of presentations and/or learning objectives may be useful in this regard.

*What is required of osteopathic physicians?*

The licensure cycle of the Pennsylvania Board of Osteopathic Medicine runs from November 1, 2004 through October 31, 2006. With this year’s renewal, physicians will be required to attest to completion of CME requirements (<http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/chapter25/s25.271.html>). These include 100 credits, of which 20 must be AOA Category 1. 12 credits must be in the area of patient/safety and risk management (these can be AOA Category 1 or 2).