



FOCUS ON

Developed by Alliance for Continuing Education
in the Health Professions

The Benefit of Continuing Education (CE) to Patients and the Public

Every day, media outlets report research findings about optimal health prevention, diagnosis and treatment methods. Medical discoveries offer hope to patients and the public for improved health care outcomes. However, despite the wealth of existing knowledge and the continuous advances in medicine, gaps persist between optimal care and the care that is provided in many health care settings.^{1,2} Continuing Education (CE) for healthcare providers helps bridge these gaps.

What is CE?

After completing the traditional education and training pathway for a health care profession, health care providers engage in CE activities to stay up-to-date and rapidly adopt proven medical advances.

Before creating a CE activity, educators and clinicians work together to identify gaps in patient care and outcomes, determine why these gaps exist, then design education that will address the causes of the gaps. By sifting through mountains of existing and emerging data, and then presenting educational content based upon strong scientific evidence, CE professionals improve clinical practice, patient care and outcomes.

Why is CE important to health care and patient outcomes?

CE has been proven effective at improving patient outcomes and saving lives.^{3,4} The Institute for Healthcare Improvement reports that “a key factor in closing the gap between best practice and common practice is the ability of health care providers and their organizations to rapidly spread innovations and new ideas.”⁵ CE is a vehicle for spreading best practices about how to attain improved outcomes.

It takes an average of 17 years for new research submitted for publication to be broadly accepted in clinical practice.⁶ The strength of supporting scientific evidence, the availability and cost of new and alternative therapies, the impact of laws and regulations, and the need for training must all be taken into consideration before medical advances become common practice. CE accelerates this process by fostering the presentation of data that have been examined, evaluated and synthesized for the busy practitioner.

For example, since the year 2000, deaths from coronary artery disease have been reduced by nearly 40%.⁷ This reduction is due to numerous advances: new drugs (such as the statins that lower cholesterol levels); new technologies (such as drug-eluting stents that keep coronary arteries free of plaque), improved processes (such as the new protocols for heart attacks that result in faster, more effective treatment); and a greater emphasis on prevention (by controlling blood pressure, weight, and cholesterol levels). All of these advances were communicated by a network of organizations providing CE to health care professionals such as physicians, physician assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners, technologists and others.

Health care professionals committed to lifelong learning take advantage of CE opportunities provided at national and local meetings, local hospitals and medical centers, and through online, print and other forms of media. State licensure boards, certification boards, and other health care organizations understand the important of CE in the delivery of quality care and encourage, or sometimes require, regular participation in CE activities.

Call to Action

The quality of individual patient care and general public health are improved by the implementation of evidence-based medicine. CE ensures that the best evidence is known, understood and practiced by health care professionals.

Support quality patient care – Support CE.



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About the Alliance

The Alliance for Continuing Education in the Health Professions (ACEHP) is a community dedicated to its mission of accelerating excellence in healthcare performance of all health profession educators through education, advocacy and collaboration.

<http://www.acehp.org>