



# CPPD Report

The Division of Continuing Physician Professional Development  
Newsletter for the Continuing Medical Education Community

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## Item Writing Activities Approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit

Concluding a process of careful review and evaluation, the AMA Council on Medical Education this past June approved for AMA PRA category 1 credit item writing for board examinations and major self assessment tools by national medical specialty societies.

AMA PRA policy treats “service on a council or committee” as not eligible for credit, since these activities typically do not address defined educational needs, with stated educational objectives and evaluation mechanisms. However, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) requested that the AMA consider these activities for AMA PRA credit, making the strong argument that physicians learn a great deal, even within their area of expertise, when researching proposed questions and an appropriate selection of answers.

The Council agreed in principle that item writing could be configured to fit within the overall structure that governs the AMA PRA credit system. As a result, CPPD staff was asked to convene a group of interested experts to discuss what facets of the activity would have to be embedded in AMA PRA requirements for obtaining Category 1 credit.

In December of 2002, Division staff met with representatives from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American College of Physicians (ACP), Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), American College of Cardiology (ACC), ACOG., and the National Board of Medical Examiners. Consensus opinion from this group not only supported learning associated with item writing, but also identified the peer review, where physicians must defend their questions and answers before informed colleagues, as the critical underpinning of the overall process.

Recommendations were developed, edited and then approved by the Council. These are available now to any interested and qualified providers. Providers who implement these new guidelines should keep in mind that compliance with existing AMA PRA rules is expected, but can be applied across the whole activity: i.e., the needs assessment can be global, not written for each physician drafting questions, similar to how journal based CME activities

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are handled. The guidelines can be found at [www.ama-assn.org/go/prs](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/prs), under “CME Select” then “Provider Resources.”

The test item writing activity must meet the guidelines for AMA PRA category 1 credit as detailed in the *AMA PRA Requirements for Accredited Providers* booklet (version 3.2). Additionally:

- Test item writing activities must be sponsored by an accredited provider (existing requirement).
- The questions must be developed for examinations given by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) or a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), or for peer reviewed, published, self-assessment educational activities from a national medical specialty society.
- The process for this activity must document guidance for the physician question writers on how to use evidence for writing quality questions.
- The assignments must be at a depth and scope that require a review of the literature and a knowledge of the evidence base for the questions. Physician question writers should document their review of evidence based literature.
- The physician question writers must personally participate in a group peer review of the questions. The question writers should revise their questions, when necessary, based on feedback from the peer group.
- Providers may designate each test item writing activity (as described above) for a maximum of 10 credits.

These guidelines are intended for nationally recognized examinations and self-assessment activities. For example, providers may not award AMA PRA category 1 credit to physicians for developing

CME activity post-test questions. We hope that the physician and provider communities find these guidelines useful in building item writing activities eligible for AMA PRA credit, and look forward to hearing your feedback.

### **AMA House of Delegates 2003 Annual Meeting Considers CME Policies**

Among the resolutions and reports considered this June in Chicago during the 2003 Annual Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates (HOD) were a number of particular interest to CME providers.

The Society for Academic Continuing Medical Education (SACME), because of its constructive relationship with the AMA’s Division of Continuing Physician Professional Development and the Council on Medical Education, was awarded Official Observer status to the HOD.

With Official Observer status, SACME joins another major CME organization, the Alliance for Continuing Medical Education, in making official its presence at the meetings of the HOD. By virtue of this recognition, SACME will now be encouraged to send a non-voting representative to all future meetings of the AMA HOD.

Other items of interest included CME Report 4, that addressed AMA PRA policy on enduring materials in relation to ACCME requirements, and CME Report 5, that reviewed the history and future prospects for development of an Internet based system for globally tracking AMA PRA category 1 credit (and the associated activities) for physicians.

Among the numerous certified CME activities the AMA hosted at A-03, one of the most popular was an educational session on the AMA’s Center for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response. Pursuant to public and professional interest on this topic, the AMA has developed instructional modules for Advanced and Basic Disaster Life Support (ADLS/BDLS). Look for additional details in the next issue of the CPPD Report. For other highlights of the 2003 Annual Meeting, visit: [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)

## New Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Coursework

*James J. James, MD, DrPH, MHA, Director, Center for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response*

In 2003, the AMA in collaboration with four members of the National Disaster Life Support Education Consortium (NDLSEC) - the Medical College of Georgia, University of Georgia, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, and University of Texas at Houston School of Public Health) - established the AMA Steering Committee on Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response. This will coordinate the efforts and resources of the AMA and the NDLSEC to offer an “all-hazards” training program for physicians, nurses, other health care professionals and emergency response personnel for disasters and other public health emergencies. The family of courses aims to standardize emergency response nationwide.

Issues covered in this curriculum include public health and emergency medical systems, natural and manmade disasters, traumatic and explosive events, nuclear and radiological events, chemical and biological events, medical decontamination and use of personal protective equipment, psychological consequences of disasters, legal issues of disaster response, health care facility and disaster planning, and mass casualty incidents.

Basic Disaster Life Support (BDLS), an 8 hour didactic course, emphasizes an “all-hazards” approach to disaster response. Course materials remain cohesive through the incorporation of a unifying algorithm, the D-I-S-A-S-T-E-R paradigm (D-detect, I-incident, S-scene security and safety, A-assess, S-support, T-triage/treatment, E-evacuation, and R-recovery).

Advanced Disaster Life Support (ADLS) is the “hands-on” portion of the training which focuses on operational readiness for the BDLS trained provider. The curriculum consists of interactive disaster scenarios and drills that include use of

high-fidelity mannequins, casualty decontamination and the use of personal protective equipment.

Medical specialty societies within the AMA Federation have been contacted about their interest in participating with other external reviewers in the scientific review and evaluation of the BDLS/ADLS program. Upon successful completion of each course, participants are eligible for certification and AMA PRA category 1 credit.

Members of the Steering Committee are currently engaged in developing a distance-learning model for BDLS via the Internet. They also hope to target EMS and first responder personnel with a third course, the Core Disaster Life Support (CDLS). The CDLS will also target health administrators, public health personnel, public officials and municipal administrators. This course is intended to provide an understanding of the potential clinical impacts of a public health emergency, and an understanding of the components of the response system to such emergencies.

Through the Center for Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response (CDPER), which was created in December 2002, the AMA is working to bolster medical and public health preparedness for disasters and other emergencies with agencies and associations in both the public and private sector.

BDLS, ADLS and a Course Coordinator’s Course are being held this fall (2003). For more information, or to schedule a course, contact James J. James, MD, DrPH, MHA at 312-464-5719 or visit: [www.ama-assn.org/go/disasterpreparedness](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/disasterpreparedness)

## New Developments for the PRA

The Physician's Recognition Award (PRA), established in 1968, has become the most recognizable and accepted CME certificate available. The application process has become even easier with the recently added online application. Physicians can apply online by visiting: [www.ama-assn.org/go/applypra](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/applypra)

Over 60,000 physicians currently enjoy the benefits of the PRA certificate, which demonstrates to patients and colleagues a physician's commitment to continuing professional development.

The PRA certificate is increasingly valuable to physicians because many organizations accept it as evidence of participation in CME. Twenty-four state medical boards, up from nineteen two years ago, currently recognize the PRA in lieu of their CME requirements (AK, AR, CA, DE, GU, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MA, NH, NM, ND, NE, NV, OH, OK, UT, WA, WV and WI). Current information on states with CME requirements for licensure may be found in the most recent *State Medical Licensure Requirements and Statistics* published by the AMA. To order a copy, contact the AMA Order Department at 800-621-8335.

In addition, the AMA PRA certificate retains special value for physicians with staff privileges at institutions accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). An approved AMA PRA application will satisfy the CME requirements for physicians holding privileges at JCAHO accredited organizations. Finally, the AMA PRA certificate enjoys reciprocity with the CME certificates awarded by thirteen national medical specialty societies.

Accredited providers are encouraged to share the information about the utility and availability of the PRA certificate with their participating physicians. For additional information and printable copies of the AMA PRA application, please visit [www.ama-assn.org/go/pr](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/pr). Physicians can find the online application at: [www.ama-assn.org/go/applypra](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/applypra)

For any questions and comments on the AMA PRA, please contact Charles Willis directly at (312) 464-4677 or [charles\\_willis@ama-assn.org](mailto:charles_willis@ama-assn.org)

## Online Tutorial Helps CME Professionals Stay Up to Date

Targeting new CME professionals, CPPD has developed a new online tutorial website designed to build awareness of the AMA PRA credit system and how the associated AMA PRA rules should be applied.

While the online supplement is just that – it does not replace the *AMA PRA Requirements for Accredited Providers* booklet – it efficiently reviews important components of the AMA PRA credit system that providers need to keep in mind when they certify activities for Category 1 credit. The tutorial is embedded with other useful information on CPPD's "CME Select" webpage, specifically to accommodate CME professionals who prefer accessing information online.

The tutorial, available at [www.ama-assn.org/go/cmetutorial](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/cmetutorial) fully explains the relationship between the AMA and the ACCME, details the guidelines for designating activities for AMA PRA category 1 credit, defines key terms of the credit system lexicon, covers organizational oversight of CME activities, and provides joint sponsorship guidelines, among other topics. In the tutorial, you'll meet Mary Anne, a simulated new CME professional, who will ask questions that will help providers apply to guidelines to their specific situations, and will expose CME professionals to a functional explanation of the credit system. The tutorial concludes with an interactive quiz, so that website users can review the material they have covered.

The Division of CPPD hopes that providers will find this tutorial useful as a refresher course, or training resource for new staff. We welcome your comments via e-mail to: [cppd@ama-assn.org](mailto:cppd@ama-assn.org)

## Expedited Processing Available for International PRA Credit

Since February 1st of this year, providers seeking to award AMA PRA category 1 credit to physicians not licensed in the U.S. have been asked to formally apply to the AMA. Our standard requirement is that providers apply with us at least thirty days before the live activity takes place or the enduring material is released. Although the program has worked well so far, some providers – particularly providers of Internet based enduring materials — reported requiring more rapid turnaround for some of their activities.

In order to accommodate providers faced with demanding production schedules, as well as for the benefit of all providers who may occasionally need the flexibility of applying for expedited international PRA credit approval, CPPD developed a protocol and added it to the request form at: [www.ama-assn.org/go/intlpracredit](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/intlpracredit)

For expedited international PRA credit approval, providers can submit their request(s) between twenty nine (29) days and seven (7) working days prior to their activity being released. CPPD will notify providers of AMA approval for international PRA credit within several days, either by e-mail or fax depending on how the request is received.

## Annual Conference Returns to the East Coast in 2004

It's not too early to start planning to attend the 15th Annual Conference of the National Task Force on CME Provider/Industry Collaboration, which will be held at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel on September 27-30, 2004. The evaluations are in from this year's event, which has proven to be more successful than ever. Save the date and we'll see you there!



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Past editions of the CPPD Report can be viewed in PDF format at:  
[www.ama-assn.org/go/cmecppd](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/cmecppd)

**October 25-29, 2003**

CME Leadership in the 21st Century  
Durham, NC  
[www.leadershipincme.org](http://www.leadershipincme.org)

**November 6-8, 2003**

American Academy of Pharmaceutical Physicians  
10th Annual Meeting  
Miami, FL  
[www.aapp.org](http://www.aapp.org)

**November 7-12, 2003**

SACME Fall Meeting  
Washington, DC  
[www.sacme.org](http://www.sacme.org)

**January 21-24, 2004**

Alliance for CME Annual Conference  
Atlanta, Georgia  
[www.acme-assn.org](http://www.acme-assn.org)

**May 16-19, 2004**

CME Congress 2004  
Alliance for CME, AHME, SACME  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
[www.cmecongress.org](http://www.cmecongress.org)

**September 27-30, 2004**

The 15th Annual Conference of the National Task  
Force on CME Provider/Industry Collaboration  
Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel  
[www.ama-assn.org/go/cmeforce](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/cmeforce)

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