



Recognizing physician's participation in educational activities

What physicians should know about the AMA PRA credit system

AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™] is recognized as one of the metrics for verifying a physician's participation in continuing medical education (CME) activities. These and other types of credit—such as the American Academy of Family Physicians Prescribed and Elective credits, the American Osteopathic Association CME credits, or the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Cognate credits—are accepted by many credentialing bodies for meeting various CME requirements. These bodies include medical and osteopathic boards in 49 states/territories, as well as specialty boards and other credentialing entities.

Organizations recognized to award AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™]

AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™] may only be awarded by the AMA or by CME organizations/providers accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or a recognized state medical society (SMS). Visit www.accme.org for a list of the approximately 2,200 accredited CME providers.

Identifying legitimate AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™] activities

Physicians should be aware that some organizations not accredited by either the ACCME or a recognized SMS advertise "Category 1 Credit" but this is not the same as "AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™]."

When selecting CME activities, physicians should be certain the activity is certified for credit by a CME provider accredited by either the ACCME or a recognized SMS or by the AMA directly. Accredited

CME providers are required to have two statements on their promotional materials. One must state the source of their accreditation (ACCME or SMS) while the other designates the maximum number of AMA PRA *Category 1 Credits*[™] for the activity. To help physicians identify legitimate AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™] activities, the AMA requires accredited CME providers to trademark the credit phrase, "AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™]". If credit is not indicated in this manner, physicians should question whether the activity is in fact certified for AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™].

Recognition of new methods of learning

Since the inception of the AMA PRA credit system, the AMA has sought to recognize a variety of learning formats in which valid learning occurs and for which physician participation can be documented. Originally recognition was limited to live activities, enduring materials and journal-based CME activities. In recent years, the AMA has expanded the types of activities that may be certified for AMA PRA *Category 1 Credit*[™]. While credit for most of these activities is awarded by accredited CME providers, there are some activities for which valid learning occurs that the physician may apply directly to the AMA for credit. It is important for the physician to: (1) recognize all of the types of learning activities that may be certified for CME credit, (2) claim credits from the accredited CME providers or from the AMA, and (3) maintain a complete record of accrued CME credits.

Learning activities that are planned by accredited CME providers

CME providers who have achieved ACCME or SMS accreditation are granted the privilege to certify the activities outlined below for AMA PRA *Category 1 Credits*[™] if such activities meet all requirements prescribed by the AMA. These formally structured activities must be reviewed and certified for credit in advance of physician participation. CME providers must not certify activities retroactively. The accredited CME provider will indicate to physicians how to claim credit for each type of activity.

The learning formats that may be certified for credit by accredited CME providers include:

- *Live activity*

A live activity is a certified CME activity that occurs at a specific time as scheduled by the accredited CME provider. Participation may take place in person or remotely (i.e., teleconferences or live Internet webinars). Examples include, but are not limited to, national, regional or local conferences, workshops, seminars, regularly scheduled conferences, journal clubs, simulation workshops, structured learning activities presented during a committee meeting and live Internet webinars. Credit is awarded based on each hour of participation claimed by the physician rounded to the nearest quarter hour or 0.25 credit. Accredited CME providers may also choose to award credit to physician faculty for original presentations at their

certified live activities in the ratio of two credits for each hour of presentation of original material.

- *Enduring material*

An enduring material is a certified CME activity that endures over a specified time. These include print, audio, video and Internet materials (e.g., monographs, podcasts, CD-ROMS, DVDs and Web-based activities). Credit is awarded to physicians who meet at least the minimum performance level on the learner assessment as set by the accredited CME provider.

- *Journal-based CME activity*

A journal-based CME activity is a certified CME activity in which an article within a peer-reviewed, professional journal is certified for credit by an accredited CME provider prior to publication of the journal. One AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ is awarded for meeting the minimum performance level on the learner assessment as set by the accredited CME provider for each certified article.

- *Test item writing activity*

A test item writing activity is a certified CME activity wherein physicians learn through their contribution to the development of questions for high-stakes examinations, or peer-reviewed self-assessment activities, by researching, drafting and defending potential questions. These questions must be developed for examinations given by the National Board of Medical Examiners 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. A physician is awarded 10 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for completion of each test item writing activity.

- *Manuscript review (for journals)*
Manuscript review is a certified CME activity in which a physician learns through the critical review of an assigned journal manuscript. A physician is awarded 3 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for completion of each manuscript review that is deemed acceptable by the editor.

- *Performance improvement CME (PI CME) activity*

PI CME is a certified CME activity involving a structured, long-term three-stage process by which a physician or group of physicians can: (1) learn about specific performance measures and retrospectively assess their practice using the selected performance measures, (2) implement interventions to improve their performance, and (3) re-evaluate their performance. A PI CME activity is designated for 20 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for completion of all three stages; if a physician only completes the first and/or second stages he or she is awarded 5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for each stage completed.

- *Internet point of care learning (PoC)*

A PoC activity is a certified CME activity structured by an accredited CME provider in which a physician engages in self-directed online learning on topics relevant to their clinical practice. Learning for this activity is driven by a reflective process in which a physician must document: (1) his or her clinical question, (2) the peer-reviewed, vetted sources consulted, and (3) the application to practice. A physician is awarded 0.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ for completion of the three-step learning cycle.

Learning activities recognized directly by the AMA

Certain activities have been recognized as valuable learning experiences that are not under the auspices of an accredited CME provider. The AMA will directly award credit for these activities when all required documentation is submitted. ACCME/SMS-accredited CME providers may not award AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ for these activities, with the exception of “Teaching at a live activity”; credit is awarded by the AMA (www.ama-assn.org/go/directcredit). These educational activities recognized by the AMA for direct credit include:

- Publishing articles—publishing, as a lead author (first listed), an article in a journal included in the MEDLINE bibliographic database; 10 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ per article

- Poster presentations—preparing a poster presentation, as the first author, that is included in the published abstracts for a conference certified for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™; 5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ per poster presentation

- Medically related advanced degree—obtaining a medically related advanced degree, such as a masters in public health; 25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™

- ABMS® member-board certification or ABMS Maintenance of Certification® (MOC)—recognizes the educational effort associated with successfully completing an ABMS board certification process; 25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for certification or MOC completed prior to September 1, 2010; 60 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for certification or MOC completed on or after September 1, 2010

- Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited education—recognizes the educational effort associated with successful participation in an ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship program; 20 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ per year
- Teaching at a live activity—faculty may claim two AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for each hour they present an original presentation at a live activity certified for such credit, if this credit was not claimed already by the physician through the accredited CME provider of the activity. Credit may be claimed in 15 minute or 0.25 credit increments.

Claiming AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ and maintaining CME records

It is important for physicians to recognize their ethical responsibility to claim only the CME credits commensurate with their actual participation in a live activity. Accredited CME providers are expected to award AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ based on the amount of credit claimed by the individual physician rather than awarding the maximum amount of credit designated for the activity. Physicians should claim credit immediately upon completion of the activity.

There is no central repository for collecting and maintaining a record of a physician's CME credits. Some hospitals and medical societies do provide tracking services for physician members, but because physicians obtain CME from many sources, these systems depend on physician self-reporting to be complete. Ultimately each physician must be responsible for maintaining his or her own records of participation in CME.

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™

The AMA recognizes that there are other educational experiences that may not be certified by an accredited

CME provider or may not qualify for direct credits, but that do provide valuable learning for the physician. Examples of such activities include:

- Participating in live activities not certified for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™
- Teaching residents, medical students or other health professionals
- Unstructured online searching and learning (i.e., not Internet PoC)
- Reading authoritative medical literature
- Consultation with peers and medical experts
- Group discussions
- Self-assessment activities
- Medical writing
- Preceptorship participation
- Research
- Peer review and quality assurance participation

Participation in an activity listed above may be claimed by the physician for AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ if the activity meets all of the following four criteria:

- 1) complies with the AMA definition of CME
- 2) complies with the AMA relevant ethical opinion; this currently includes 8.061 "Gifts to physicians from industry" and 9.011 "Continuing medical education"
- 3) is nonpromotional
- 4) the physician finds it to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his or her practice

Accredited CME providers must not certify activities for AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™. These must be claimed and documented by the physician learner.

Recording AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ activities is important, as these credits may count toward meeting the requirements for the AMA Physician's Recognition

Award, as well as for licensing and other credentialing requirements. Each physician is responsible for claiming and maintaining a record of their AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™. When claiming AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™, physicians should calculate the number of credits based on the number of hours of participation rounded to the nearest quarter hour (e.g., 85 minutes of participation amounts to 1.5 AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™). Physicians should document the activity title or description, subject or content area, date(s) of participation and number of credits claimed.

Summary

To receive AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ and AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™, it is important for physicians to recognize that:

- AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ is a common metric for verifying participation in CME.
- AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ can be awarded only by ACCME or SMS accredited CME providers or by the AMA itself.
- Legitimate AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ activities can be identified by use of the trademarked term "AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™."
- Accredited CME providers certify AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ of formally planned learning activities in advance; activities must not be certified for credit retroactively.
- Physicians may claim AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ directly from the AMA for specific learning experiences that can be documented and that are not developed by an accredited CME provider as AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ activities.
- It is the physicians' ethical responsibility to claim only the credit commensurate with their

participation in the activity or for successful completion of the prescribed requirements.

- Physicians must maintain their own records of CME credits earned.
- *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* may be used to meet the requirements for both the AMA PRA and for credentialing purposes.

There are three easy ways to get additional information about AMA PRA credit and the AMA Physician's Recognition Award.

Visit www.ama-assn.org/go/pr

E-mail pra@ama-assn.org

Call (312) 464-4664

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