



# CME Accreditation: *The Standards Behind Your Learning and Your Role Behind the Standards*

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*"This program meets the accreditation criteria of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and has been accredited for up to 6.0 MAINPRO-M1 credits."*

*"This course is an accredited group learning activity under Section 1 as defined by the Maintenance of Certification Program of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada."*



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You've seen these statements before. They appear on all accredited continuing medical education (CME) activities in Canada (with some exceptions in Quebec). But what do they mean?

Accreditation provides the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" for CME activities. It stimulates, supports and recognizes good quality CME. It also plays a key role in ongoing physician credentialing.

Participating in accredited CME is an essential component of the Maintenance of Certification programs of both national colleges and it will likely be a key element in future re-validation systems being discussed by the provincial licensing authorities.

These organizations would not place such importance on accredited CME if they were not confident in the value and validity of accreditation standards and processes.

In Canada, there are four systems of CME accreditation:

1. The College of Family Physicians of Canada and its provincial chapters accredit activities for family physicians.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Royal College accredits the National Specialty Societies (NSS) so that NSS' CME activities can be claimed by their members under Section 1.<sup>2</sup>
3. The independent Committee on the Accreditation of CME accredits the CME offices in all Canadian medical schools. Therefore, activities offered by the offices can be submitted to the national Colleges for their Maintenance of Certification programs.
4. In Quebec, the Collège des médecins du Québec accredits CME providers and the Fédération des omnipraticiens du Québec approves activities for family physicians.<sup>3,4</sup>

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Some people believe this system is overly complex and involves too many organizations. However, these organizations co-operate in various ways and share common elements. In fact, there is remarkable uniformity across the different standards. They all contain the same basic requirements for CME activities, including:

- there should be a defined target audience;
- planning should start with a need assessment;
- learning objectives are defined;
- learning resources and formats are appropriate to the learning objectives;
- participants can evaluate the activity and
- the planning and implementation of the activity meet accepted ethical standards, particularly regarding commercial support.

Canadian accrediting organizations rely on the CMA Policy on Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry.<sup>5</sup> Organizations in Quebec follow the Code d'éthique des intervenants en éducation médicale continue.<sup>6</sup>

### *Your role*

The accreditation systems are run by your colleagues. Practising physicians make up the policy committees that define the standards and serve as reviewers of accreditation applications. Furthermore, CME activities are planned by committees consisting mainly of physicians.

As an individual who attends one or more of the many hundreds of accredited activities held each year in Canada, what can you do to help improve the system?

Well, first of all, fill in those evaluation forms! The people who plan your CME activities find this feedback vital in planning future events. Also, talk to the speakers or to someone in the planning organization if there was something you didn't like or even just to thank them for their efforts. You can also contact the organization that accredited the activity, if you have concerns about how or why the activity was accredited. All accrediting bodies are interested in this kind of feedback.

You can also get involved in more direct ways to have a broader impact.

- Volunteer to sit on the planning committee of a local CME activity.
- Offer to contribute to your university's CME office advisory committee.
- Work with your NSS to help develop its CME services for your colleagues.
- If you are in Quebec, work with your local Association des médecins omnipraticiens in rolling out some of the outstanding workshops available there.

The current education standards for CME accreditation have progressed significantly in the last few years. With your ongoing support, either simply as a participant in accredited CME or through a more active role in shaping policy, CME accreditation will continue to play an important role in helping define what we do as physicians.

*cme*

#### References

1. The College of Family Physicians of Canada: [www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca).
2. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada: [www.rcpsc.medical.org](http://www.rcpsc.medical.org).
3. Collège des médecins du Québec: [www.cmq.org](http://www.cmq.org).
4. Fédération des médecins omnipraticiens du Québec: [www.fmoq.org](http://www.fmoq.org).
5. CMA Policy: [www.cma.ca/index.cfm/cj\\_id/2429/la\\_id/1.htm](http://www.cma.ca/index.cfm/cj_id/2429/la_id/1.htm).
6. Quebec's Code d'éthique: [www.cemcq.qc.ca/fr/index\\_code.cfm](http://www.cemcq.qc.ca/fr/index_code.cfm).