



Recognizing physicians' participation in educational activities

What physicians should know about the AMA PRA Credit System

AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ is commonly 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 licensing boards in 46 states, as well as specialty boards, the Joint Commission 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 2,500 recognized providers.

Identifying legitimate AMA PRA Category 1 Credit activities

Physicians should be aware that some non-accredited organizations advertise "Category 1 Credits" but these are not the same as "AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™."

When selecting CME activities, physicians should be certain the credit is being awarded by an accredited CME provider. 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 activities, the AMA requires its 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 eligible 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 CME activities in which valid learning occurs and for which physician participation can be documented. Originally recognition was limited to live activities, enduring materials and journal CME. In recent years, the AMA has expanded the types of activities that may be awarded AMA PRA Category 1 Credit. While credit for most of these activities is awarded by accredited CME providers, there are some activities that require the physician to apply directly to the AMA for credit. It is important for the physician to recognize all of the types of learning activities for which CME credit may be awarded, to claim credits from the accredited CME providers or from the AMA, and to maintain a complete record of his or her accrued CME credit.

Learning activities that are planned by accredited CME providers

CME providers who have achieved ACCME or SMS accreditation are granted the privilege to designate/

award AMA PRA Category 1 Credits for the activities outlined below if such activities meet all requirements prescribed by the AMA. These formally structured activities must be reviewed and designated for credit in advance of physician participation. CME providers must not designate or award credits retrospectively; this practice may warrant the withdrawal of the accredited CME provider's privilege to award credits. The CME provider will indicate to physicians how to claim credit for each type of activity.

Activities for which accredited CME providers can designate/award credit include:

- *Live activities*
These are CME activities that physicians must attend (in person or virtually), such as national conferences, live Internet teleconferences, local workshops, seminars, grand rounds or departmental scientific meetings. Credit is awarded based on each hour of participation claimed by the physician rounded to the nearest quarter hour or 0.25 credit. Accredited providers may also award credit to faculty for live activities in the ratio of two credits for each hour of an original presentation.
- *Enduring materials*
These include CME activities such as printed, recorded, audio, video and/or online/electronic activities planned as educational activities. Providers designate credit based on a good faith estimate of the amount of time it will take a physician to complete the activity. Credit is awarded based on each hour of participation claimed by

the physician rounded to the nearest quarter hour or 0.25 credit.

- **Journal-based CME learning**
These represent CME activities within a peer-reviewed, professional journal designated for credit by an accredited CME provider (e.g., the *Journal of the American Medical Association*). A maximum of one credit is awarded for completion of each designated article.
- **Test item writing**
Another CME activity includes researching, drafting and defending potential questions 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 may be awarded a maximum of 10 credits for completion of each test item writing activity.
- **Manuscript review (for journals)**
This includes CME activities in which journal manuscripts indexed by MEDLINE® are critically reviewed under the direction of an editor working with an accredited CME provider. A physician may be awarded a maximum of three credits for completion of each manuscript review.
- **Performance improvement (PI) learning**
These are CME activities involving a structured, three-stage process by which a physician or group of physicians can: (1) learn about specific performance measures and retrospectively assess their practice; (2) implement interventions to improve their outcomes; and (3) re-evaluate their performance. With PI CME, a physician may be awarded five credits for completion of each of the three stages of PI CME that he or she is actively engaged in, with an additional five credits being awarded if a physician completes all three stages in sequence. The PI CME learning model integrates performance improvement interventions as part of an educational activity.

The PI model of CME recasts the important role that CME can play in changing/measuring physician performance. It is anticipated that participation in PI CME activities as planned by accredited CME providers will be recognized by specialty boards as meeting the requirements for Part IV of Maintenance of Certification Performance in Practice. PI CME may also be accepted as meeting other requirements for performance data, such as Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services pay for performance and eventually maintenance of licensure. Physicians can advance the development of PI CME by working with accredited CME providers to encourage the development of these activities.

- **Internet point of care learning (PoC)**
This form of CME activity represents structured, self-directed online learning by physicians on topics relevant to their clinical practice. Learning for this activity is driven by a reflective process in which a physician must document his or her clinical question, the sources consulted and the application to practice. A physician may be awarded 0.5 credits for completion of the three-step learning cycle.
- **Other activities**
Additional structured activities, such as committee learning or learning plans/contracts, that are developed in accordance with all appropriate AMA PRA rules may be designated for CME credit.

Learning activities recognized directly by the AMA

Certain activities have been recognized by the AMA as valuable learning experiences that are not formally sponsored by 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 credits for these activities; credit may only be awarded by applying directly to the AMA (www.ama-assn.org/go/cme). Other educational activities recognized by the AMA for CME credit include:

- Faculty may claim two AMA PRA Category 1 Credits for each hour they deliver an original presentation at a live activity designated for such credit if the accredited CME provider does not choose to award credit for this. Credit may be claimed in 15 minute or 0.25 credit increments.
- Publishing articles (publishing, as a lead author, 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, which is also included in the published abstract, for a conference designated for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit; five AMA PRA Category 1 Credits per poster presentation)
- Medically related advanced degrees (25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits)
- ABMS® member-board certification, recertification and/or maintenance of certification (recognizes the educational effort associated with successfully completing an ABMS board certification process; 25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits)
- 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)
- Independent learning (credit varies depending on the details of the approved project)

Claiming AMA PRA Category 1 Credit and maintaining CME records

It is important for physicians to recognize their ethical responsibility to only claim CME credits commensurate with their actual participation in any CME 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. This is why CME providers ask physicians how many credits are being claimed *before* issuing certificates or transcripts. Physicians should claim credit immediately upon completion of the activity.

There is currently 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 developed 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:

- 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
- Preceptorships
- Research
- Participating in live activities not designated for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit

Participation in an activity listed above may be claimed by the physician for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* if all three of the following are true:

- 1) The activity complies with the AMA definition of CME.
- 2) The activity complies with the AMA ethical opinions on gifts

to physicians from industry and ethical issues in CME (i.e., is not promotional).

- 3) The activity is determined by the physician to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his or her practice.

Accredited CME providers may *not* designate 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 PRA, as well as for licensing and other credentialing requirements. 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).

The AMA Physician's Recognition Award

The AMA Physician's Recognition Award certificate, the basis of the AMA PRA credit system, was established in 1968 to recognize physicians who, by participating in CME activities, have demonstrated their commitment to staying current with advances in medicine. The AMA PRA certificate can be awarded to a physician who holds a valid and current license issued by one of the U.S., Canadian or Mexican licensing jurisdictions and meets the AMA PRA certificate's CME credit requirements (i.e., 50 credits per year/150 in three years for the standard certificate, or 90 credits per year/270 in three years for the certificate with commendation). More than 41 state licensing boards will accept a current and valid AMA PRA certificate as documentation of having met one's CME requirements. Visit www.ama-assn.org/go/prc for more information and to print an application.

Summary

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

- AMA PRA Category 1 Credit is the most 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 activities can be identified by use of the trademarked term "AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™."
- Accredited CME providers may designate (in advance) AMA PRA Category 1 Credit for a variety of formally planned learning activities, but no activities may be designated for credit retrospectively.
- Physicians may claim AMA PRA Category 1 Credit directly from the AMA for specific learning experiences that can be documented and that are not formally sponsored by an accredited CME provider.
- It is physicians' ethical responsibility to claim credit only commensurate with their participation in the activity.
- Physicians must maintain their own records of CME credits earned.
- AMA PRA Category 2 Credits may be used to meet the requirements for both AMA PRA and for other 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/prc
E-mail pra@ama-assn.org
Call (312) 464-4672