

SAMPLE METHODS TO FACILITATE ASSESSMENT FOR PHYSICIANS AND CME PROVIDERS

An accredited provider must analyze changes in learners' competence (knowing how to do something/strategies), performance (practice behavior), or patient outcomes achieved as a result of the *overall* program's activities/educational intervention, and compare the analysis with the expected results of the CME program (described in its CME mission statement). For the physician learner, a component of recertification is to participate in lifelong learning and self-assessment. The literature suggests that for self-assessment to be effective there needs to be outside sources to measure against. Guided feedback and externally determined self-assessments are needed for accurate self appraisal of performance.^{1,2} As new tools, methods and data on practice behaviors become available, the processes providers use to assess performance improvements are expected to advance. Currently, there are several methods to help determine the effectiveness of educational activities/interventions, to challenge the learner to consider the impact of the educational activity on his or her learning and practice and to help reinforce the content. Some examples are described below:

Changes in knowledge:

- If the educational need underlying a practice gap is lack of knowledge, a provider might distribute knowledge test with questions related to the objective(s). Knowledge tests include multiple-choice questions, true/false, open-ended or other examinations directly related to learning objectives. *Knowledge tests combined with follow-up review, during or after an activity, can be an effective method for reinforcing learning and providing feedback to the learner.*

Changes in competence:

- If the objective of the activity is for learners to know how to screen patient for depression, participants might be asked, "What questions will you ask your patients to help screen for depression that you were not asking before the activity?" Another method to assess changes in competence might include asking participants to respond to a sample case subsequent to the activity.

Self reported changes in performance:

- The provider might ask the physician learner questions, such as, "Did this educational activity address ways to help you make changes in your practice? If yes, please describe."
- Has your practice changed because of the information you received after the activity? Do you intend to make other changes related to (topic/objective)?

Objective assessment of changes in performance

- Follow-up chart audit with feedback might be conducted. An audit may be completed by an external agency or by the participants themselves, if the physician-participants are provided with instructions and/or tools to do so. In a follow-up questionnaire, the provider might ask learners, "In your audit of 40 charts, how many times did you ask each of the required questions to screen your patients for depression?" (An audit generally involves the abstraction of patient records to create reports shared with physician-learners.)

Changes in patient care

- Determining that a CME intervention alone changed patient care may be unrealistic. A CME provider may participate, as one part or as a strategic asset, in an institutional or system framework for quality improvement (criteria 21). Review of changes in patient care data related to the quality improvement initiative may be used to assess the effectiveness of the CME program in meeting its mission.

Other questions that may also stimulate thinking for the physician about additional information needed to influence practice and that may help inform the provider in planning future learning activities are, for example:

- Have you encountered barriers while trying to introduce change in your practice? If so, what are they? Do you have resources to overcome barriers to changes you want to make in practice? If not, what resources are needed?
- Two months ago you participated in an educational activity on (topic). Did the activity influence the way you practice? If so, please describe how? If not, please explain.
- What kind of situations are you still unsure how to resolve? How do you now plan on dealing with these issues? What plans do you have to find the answers?

¹ Eva KW, et al, Acad Med. 2005;80:S46-S54.

² Davis D, et al, JAMA, September 6, 2006-Vol. 296, No.9.