



VOLUME 18, NO. 2, FEBRUARY 1996

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Annual Conference Provides Foundation for a Promising Future

By Donald E. Moore Jr., Ph.D., 1996 Conference Co-chair

The dust from the 21st Annual Conference may have settled at the Hilton at Walt Disney World Village, but I hope it hasn't settled in your mind. The conference, held Jan. 17-21, allowed for the presentation of many new ideas and ways of looking at how to conduct continuing medical education. I hope the many attendees have reflected over what they learned and determined how to apply that new knowledge at home.

Speakers Jerry Apps and John Izzo told attendees about challenges and opportunities for implementing new ideas and accomplishing new ways of offering CME. Most importantly, Apps told attendees that they could be leaders, developing their personal style of leadership. Meanwhile, Izzo challenged attendees "take the first seat in the roller coaster." Both suggested that attendees take risks.

Attendees of the focus sessions, educational sessions or special institutes are on their way to becoming prepared for the challenges and opportunities they will face as CME undergoes dramatic change. I visited as many sessions as I could, and good stuff was going on in all of them. Speakers and facilitators were providing solid information and sharing their experiences, expertise and perspectives. Participants were thoroughly involved, taking copious notes, formulating questions and sharing their experiences, expertise and perspectives as well.

The conference was a wonderful experience for me. Many people helped make it a success. In fact, this year's conference was a volunteer effort. Except for a few guest speakers, Alliance members spent weeks preparing educational and focus sessions as well as posters to educate the membership. It was heartwarming to see the dialogue exchange, especially when a long-burning question was answered.

From what I observed at the 21st Annual Conference, the profession of CME is strong and vibrant. And, while the future is uncertain, the strength exhibited by the Alliance membership at the meeting will help distinguish between risks that could endanger CME and new opportunities for CME which help physicians provide the best possible care to their patients.

Alliance Launches Web Service

By Michele Y. Burpeau-DiGregorio, Ph.D. Member Services Committee Chair, and Judith G. Ribble, Ph.D., Member Services Committee

When one meets a mouse in Orlando, Fla., it's usually the kind with two ears and a long tail. For members at the Alliance for Continuing Medical Education's 21st Annual Conference last month, their close encounter of the mouse kind took on a different shape—two buttons and a long cord attached to a computer.

After a year of planning, the Alliance launched its new World Wide Web site, one of its most exciting and ambitious member services. Through demonstrations in the Professional Resource Center, Alliance members were treated to a peek at the Alliance's Web site, which is housed on HELIX (Health Education Learning & Information Exchange).

Through a two-year, unrestricted educational grant from Glaxo Wellcome Medical & Professional Education, the St. Louis College of Pharmacy will manage the Alliance's site and help members navigate the vast health-care and education resources available via the Internet. "The response from Alliance members at the conference was uniformly enthusiastic," says Frances Maitland, Alliance executive director. "By giving every Alliance member access to the Alliance Web site, this service offers each of us a unique opportunity to enhance our professional skills, knowledge and expertise on a daily basis. The debut of HELIX-Web and the Alliance home page represents a major step forward for our organization, and we encourage everyone to take advantage of this resource."

Maitland stresses that the HELIX-Web service and software packets are provided at no charge to Alliance members. "The grant from Glaxo Wellcome Medical & Professional Education covers development costs and up to 200 hours of telephone access for each member during the two-year pilot program," Maitland says. "While Alliance members dial local CompuServe phone numbers to access the Alliance site, they do not have to join CompuServe or any other on-line service as long as they use the Alliance software. Members wanting to use a different program are welcome to, but they will have to pay any charges imposed by their Internet provider."

Maitland notes that the pilot program affords each member 200 hours of Web site access. "The board urges the membership to invest these hours wisely by exploring the Alliance's Web resources, exchanging ideas with members and offering ideas on how we can improve this service," she says.

The Alliance software is a version of Spry Mosaic, a popular Web browser, that was tailored to the Alliance's special requirements. After installing the software, members can access the Alliance home page by clicking twice on the Alliance for CME icon.

Supported by the Medical & Professional Education Department of Glaxo Wellcome, HELIX was developed by the St. Louis College of Pharmacy. Launched in 1992, HELIX is the world's largest telecommunication service for pharmacists. The Alliance Web site is the first HELIX service to be offered on the Web.

Look Before You Leap

Distribution of the HELIX-Web introductory packet and software will begin this month. For Alliance members not familiar with the ways of the Web, following are a few tips.

- Access the Alliance home page by entering your name and password on the log-in screen. Note: Your password is your membership ID number, which is printed on your Alliance mailing label.
- Web pages are documents containing text and graphics stored on computers linked via the Web. You can print them by clicking on the Print option under File in the main menu.
- Click on any text or graphics highlighted in blue to jump to the next page. For example, click on SIG Groups under Discussion Areas on the Alliance home page to see the available special interest group conferences, such as Hospitals and Health Networks and State Medical Societies.
- Send electronic mail to any Alliance member or Internet user by clicking on the Private E-Mail button and entering the individual's Internet address, your name and message. Note: If the member's name is highlighted in blue, you need only click on the name and enter a message.
- Speed up your work on the Web by turning off Auto Load Images under View (graphic images and pictures will be displayed as globe icons).
- Pose a question or submit a comment to fellow Alliance members in a conference area by clicking on the Add Entry To This Conference button on the conferences and electronic mail page.
- Search the Alliance Web site by clicking on the Search button and entering keywords (e.g., family and medicine).
- Jump from the Alliance site to other Web sites by clicking Open under File and entering the address (e.g., enter <http://www.nih.gov> to visit the National Institute of Health Web site).

Time of Transition for Accreditation of CME

By Murray Kopelow, M.D., Executive Director/Secretary, ACCME

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education plans to restructure its accreditation process.

The ACCME intends to develop an accreditation system that more directly focuses the educational enterprise on the health of patients and the practice-based needs of physicians, as well as the institutional mission of the accredited sponsor. The framework

will be developed into a new accreditation system through a consensus-building process of obtaining input from practicing physicians, state medical societies, professional educators, medical schools and specialty societies.

The current accreditation system is based on educational essentials of curriculum planning. The new framework would assess the overall educational program of an organization, focusing on the outcomes of program planning. The proposed framework would reward educational creativity by sponsors who utilize the array of learning theories in adult education, while at the same time ensuring the integrity of the CME enterprise.

The ACCME is requesting feedback on the following points of the new system.

- Sponsors will be accredited based on their commitment to the educational process and patient outcomes of these processes.
- The system will emphasize innovative educational models and quality outcomes for patients while maintaining fundamental and state-of-the-art medical knowledge for physicians.
- The ACCME will award a basic accreditation status with additional competencies, such as the development of enduring materials or personalized education programs, requiring additional ability on the part of the sponsor.
- Eligibility criteria for accreditation will be based on things such as hours of educational programming presented, commitment to physician education and outcomes, and willingness to abide by ACCME policies.
- The application process will be streamlined.
- There will be a single-length accreditation period, with regular communication between the ACCME and sponsor for monitoring of continuing excellence.
- The sponsor will identify its mission, purpose or vision. That and adherence to an ethical standard of practice will be the framework on which the sponsor's educational enterprise is built and measured.
- The sponsors will incorporate continuous evaluation and program improvement into their overall education programs utilizing sound educational principles.
- Specific accreditation standards will be developed for providers of special competencies, such as proctoring of nonaccredited sponsors, development of enduring materials, personalized learning systems and computer-assisted instruction via electronic transmission.

The action plan for ACCME now includes:

- Setting up mechanisms to receive input from the stakeholders,
- Developing mechanisms for the implementation of pilot demonstrations using the new framework,
- Developing a transition mechanism, and
- Starting to implement aspects of its new system during 1997.

This is an exciting time for CME. The ACCME is committed to assisting sponsors in assuring the integrity of the CME enterprise.

Japanese Medical Association Offers CME

By Tomoko Onishi

There are 263,687 physicians in Japan for a population of 124 million, according to the recently published 1993 survey by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Among these physicians are 155,659 hospital-based physicians and 108,028 general practitioners. So how do Japanese physicians keep on the cutting edge?

The Japanese Medical Association (JMA) is one of the organizations offering continuing medical education in Japan. The association's CME is offered to its approximately 136,000 members, who typically are general practitioners. The association's CME started in April 1987 to provide continuing self-learning. Since JMA's establishment, its CME has gone through different phases. Now, the association's CME:

- Has an emphasis on hands-on learning;
- Encourages the publishing and presenting of papers in place of didactic learning;
- Gives numerical credit to each suggested CME activity for easier evaluation and self-assessment;
- Issues a CME certificate for those who earn more than 50 credits per year; and
- Provides an award for individuals who earn more than 50 credits per year for three consecutive years.

Activities such as attending a non-JMA-sponsored lecture, coauthoring a paper or making a general session presentation as a co-presenter secures three credits each from JMA, while attending a JMA-sponsored lecture, making a general session presentation or being the main author of a paper secures five credits. Being a presenter or panelist at a special lecture session during an annual meeting secures 10 credits.

Additional CME programs are offered by medical societies, which certify their members.