

American Medical Association  
Physicians dedicated to the health of America



# THE PHYSICIAN'S RECOGNITION AWARD

CATEGORY ① AND ② CREDIT  
RECIPROCITY  
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

VERSION 3.0



## PRA Booklet for Physicians

### Introduction

For over 30 years, physicians who participate in continuing medical education (CME) have been recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA) with the Physician's Recognition Award (PRA). A physician's patients and colleagues recognize the certificate as evidence of a commitment to keeping up-to-date with advances in biomedical science other developments in medicine.

The PRA certificate is valuable to physicians because many organizations accept it as evidence of participation in CME. Some states' licensing boards and hospitals will accept the PRA as proof of having completed the required CME. A PRA application from a physician working in a hospital that has been stamped "Approved" by the AMA will be accepted for review by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) in connection with the hospital's accreditation process.

Physicians participate in at least 50 hours a year of educational activities that meet AMA standards to earn the PRA. The PRA category 1 credit system established by the AMA has become the CME standard for licensing boards and specialty organizations nationwide.

We hope that you decide to become involved in a program honoring physicians who participate in CME to meet the expectations and needs of their patients.



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## Continuing Medical Education and the Physician's Recognition Award

### CME definition

CME consists of educational activities that serve to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, professional performance and relationships a physician uses to provide services for patients, the public, or the profession. The content of CME is that body of knowledge and skills generally recognized and accepted by the profession as within the basic medical sciences, the discipline of clinical medicine, and the provision of health care to the public.

### Ethical considerations for participants in CME

CME should be chosen for its educational value and not for amenities unrelated to the educational purpose of the activity. Participation in activities where industry has paid any of the physician's expenses or offered any other inappropriate gift is unethical and those activities may not be claimed for credit.

Physicians should claim credits commensurate with the actual time spent on an activity. The award recognizes physicians truly dedicated to providing their patients with the most up-to-date and appropriate medical care.

The full text and interpretations of ethical opinions on Gifts to Physicians from Industry (8.061) and Ethical Issues in CME (9.011) may be found in the Appendix.

### Eligibility

Physicians may apply for the PRA if they hold a valid and current license issued by one of the United States, Canadian, or Mexican licensing jurisdictions or are engaged in residency training in an accredited program in the United States or Canada. International members of the AMA are also eligible for the award.

## Earning credit toward the PRA

### Category 1 and 2 credit definitions

There are two categories of AMA credit. Generally speaking, category 1 activities are designated by an accredited provider before the physician participates in them. Examples include attendance and presentations at a conference where AMA PRA category 1 credit will be given. Physicians may also earn credit for publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal and meritorious learning experiences that have been preapproved for credit.

Category 2 activities, by contrast, have not been formally designated by an accredited provider for category 1 credit. Individual physicians may claim category 2 credit for learning experiences that have improved the care they provide their patients. Category 2 activities include reading journal articles and consulting with colleagues. Many times participation in these activities cannot be documented.

### Basic requirements for the PRA

The AMA offers 1-, 2- and 3-year certificates.

The requirements for each are as follows:

1-year certificate – 50 hours

- 20 hours category 1
- 30 hours category 1 or 2

2-year certificate – 100 hours

- 40 hours category 1
- 60 hours category 1 or 2

3-year certificate – 150 hours

- 60 hours category 1
- 90 hours category 1 or 2

The AMA requires at least half of the credits earned to be within the physician's specialty or area of practice. Ethics, office management, and physician-patient development are appropriate subjects of CME but are not considered specialty-specific education.

The CME required to earn the PRA is as much or more than the amount necessary for licensure in states that mandate CME.

## Category 1 activities

The following activities can be reported for AMA PRA category 1 credit

Activity	Category 1 Credits Awarded
<p><i>Attendance-based learning activities by accredited providers</i></p> <p>Most CME activities claimed for category 1 credit are structured events offered by organizations accredited for CME by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or by a state medical society. Examples include workshops, seminars, grand rounds, and other scientific meetings. The provider of the event will distribute certificates of attendance that can be used as proof of credit hours earned.</p>	<p>Per hour of attendance</p>
<p><i>CME activities in journals from accredited providers</i></p> <p>Physicians may claim credit for activities in journals that have been designated for credit. These activities are provided in peer-reviewed journals and involve an examination or evaluation.</p>	<p>Generally 1 credit per article</p>
<p><i>CME enduring materials</i></p> <p>Enduring materials are printed, recorded, or electronic materials designated by accredited organizations. These include printed materials, videotapes, internet activities, and computer-assisted instruction.</p>	<p>Per hour of study</p>
<p><i>Published articles</i></p> <p>First- or second-authors of articles published in peer-reviewed journals (publications included in the Index Medicus) may claim category 1 credit from the AMA by including a reprint of the first page of the article as part of the PRA application.</p>	<p>10 credits per article, 1 article per year</p>

Activity	Category 1 Credits Awarded
<p><i>Presentations at a conference</i></p> <p>Category 1 credit may be reported to the AMA on a PRA application for presenting a poster or teaching at a medical meeting already designated for category 1 credit. To obtain credit for presenting a poster, attach to the application a page from the program with the presentation abstract and identification of the presenter. To earn credit for teaching, include with the application a program or announcement of the activity with identification of the presenter and showing the category 1 designation.</p>	<p>5 credits per poster, 1 poster per year 2 credits for each hour of teaching, with a maximum of 10 credits per year</p>
<p><i>Specialty board certification and recertification</i></p> <p>Specialty board certification and recertification by an ABMS member specialty board are treated in one of two ways. (1) In most cases they are endorsed for a three-year PRA certificate. The PRA certificate recognizes the educational effort involved in being certified. The endorsement certificate does not include the award of any AMA PRA category 1 credit. Physicians requesting a PRA certificate through endorsement should attach a copy of the recertification certificate or the specialty board notification letter. (2) Physician applicants who specifically request it will be provided with 25 AMA PRA category 1 credits. Those requesting the 25 hours of category 1 credit should indicate that they want this credit instead of a 3-year certificate. Please follow the instructions on the PRA application form.</p>	<p>25 credits</p>

Activity	Category 1 Credits Awarded
<p><i>Medically related degrees</i></p> <p>Earning an advanced degree in an area related to medicine, such as a master's in public health, earns category 1 credit. To receive the credit from the AMA, attach to the application a copy of the diploma or transcript.</p>	<p>25 credits following the award of the degree</p>
<p><i>Participation in an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited program</i></p> <p>Physicians earn 50 hours of category 1 credit per year for full- or part-time participation as residents or fellows in an ACGME-accredited residency program.</p>	<p>50 credits per year</p>
<p><i>International conferences</i></p> <p>Organizers of international conferences may apply directly to the AMA to be recognized for credit. If they have been approved, announcements will carry the following statement:</p> <p><i>The [name of conference] has been approved by the American Medical Association for AMA PRA Category 1 credit. Each physician should claim only those hours of credit that he/she actually spent in the educational activity.</i></p> <p>A representative designated by the AMA will issue a certificate of attendance at the conference.</p> <p>Attendance certificates from conferences approved by the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) may be submitted for AMA credit with the PRA application.</p>	<p>Per hour of attendance</p>

Activity	Category 1 Credits Awarded
<p><i>Other meritorious learning experiences</i></p> <p>Category 1 credit may be awarded in recognition of experience of exceptional benefit to a physician that does not fit the above descriptions. Physicians seeking credit for such an experience must obtain approval for the credit before undertaking the activity. Approval must be sought by sending a written proposal to the Continuing Physician Professional Development (CPPD) department at the AMA in which the educational need, learning objectives, content of and methods for learning the material, amount of time projected to be spent on the project, and a means of evaluation of the learning achievement are clearly stated. If faculty and educational institutions are involved, they should be identified. The AMA will approve projects at their discretion. When the project has concluded, the physician submits a final report of achievement that includes the actual time spent on the project. The AMA will then award the number of credits it determines the project has earned the physician.</p>	<p>Determined ad hoc</p>
<p><i>AMA pilot projects</i></p> <p>The PRA program evolves to meet the learning needs of physicians. Therefore, the AMA will from time to time initiate pilot programs to evaluate new methods for obtaining CME credit. Contact the AMA CPPD department at 312 464-4671 for more information.</p>	

Accredited CME sponsors may not designate a single activity for more than 50 AMA PRA category 1 credits.

## Transferable credit

The American Academy of Family Physicians' (AAFP) Prescribed Credit and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' (ACOG) formal learning Cognates will be accepted by the AMA as category 1 credit. The American Academy of Family Physicians' Prescribed Credit should be listed as AAFP Prescribed rather than as AMA PRA category 1 on the PRA application.

## Medical education numbers

In June 2000, the AMA House of Delegates adopted a policy opposing the use of physician social security numbers to obtain continuing medical education credit. One alternative way that a physician can be identified is through the physician's medical education number. Every physician on the AMA Masterfile has been assigned a medical education number.

## Category 2 activities

Category 2 credit may be earned for activities physicians have undertaken on their own that should be beneficial to their practice. Credit claimed should be commensurate with the actual time spent on an activity. The following list of non-designated activities may be reported for category 2 credit:

- Consultations with peers and experts;
- Medical research and study online;
- Using non-designated enduring materials;
- Teaching other health professionals; and
- Reading authoritative medical literature.

All of these activities should be self-reported on the AMA PRA application for credit.

## Activities that do not earn credit

The PRA is earned only by participation in CME activities. For that reason, acts of charity and service on a council or committee do not earn a physician CME credit.

Credit cannot be claimed for education incidental to the regular professional activities of a physician, such as learning that occurs from clinical experience.

Credit is not awarded for passing examinations. As indicated above, category 1 credit is awarded for specialty board certification and recertification in recognition of the learning required in preparation.

## International PRAs

The ACCME has a reciprocity agreement with the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools. Physicians licensed in Canada can apply for the PRA. The PRA is also available to Mexican physicians meeting the requirements.

International members of the AMA may apply for the PRA if they have met the credit requirements.

## Reciprocity

### Reciprocity arrangements

A PRA certificate can be provided to anyone who has met the CME requirements of the following organizations:

American Academy of Dermatology (AAD)

American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)

American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO)

American Academy of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery (AAOHNS)

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM)

American Psychiatric Association (APA)

American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA)

American Society of Clinical Pathologists/College of  
American Pathologists (ASCP/CAP)

American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (ASPRS)

American Urological Association, Inc. (AUA)

California Medical Association (CMA)

Medical Society of New Jersey (MSNJ)

Medical Society of Virginia (MSV)

National Medical Association (NMA)

These organizations send letters to physicians who have met their requirements informing the physicians that the letter can be used as proof of earning the PRA.

The PRA satisfies the American Psychiatric Association's CME requirements.

Certificates obtained through reciprocity share the expiration date of the original certificate.

### States that will accept the PRA as proof of CME

The following states will accept the PRA as proof of CME:

Alabama	Michigan
Alaska	Minnesota
California	New Hampshire
Delaware	New Mexico
Hawaii	North Dakota
Iowa	Oklahoma
Kansas	Washington
Maine	West Virginia

Current information on states with CME requirements for licensure may be found in the most recent *State Medical Licensure Requirements and Statistics* published by the AMA. Call the AMA at 1-800 621-8335 for ordering information.

### JCAHO compliance

It is a JCAHO requirement that medical staff at hospitals participate in CME. A properly filled-out PRA application stamped "Approved" by the AMA will be accepted by the JCAHO as a report of CME activities.

## Award duration

Physicians may apply for a 1-, 2-, or 3-year PRA. Applications claiming category 1 credits for residency training can be made when at least three years of training have been completed.

The term of the certificate begins on the date the physician indicates on the application. It expires on the first day of the following month, one, two or three years in the future. For example, a physician applying for a 3-year certificate on April 1, 2001, will be issued a certificate valid until May 1, 2004.

Physicians who need PRA certificates with specific expiration dates should attach a request with their application.

## Disclaimers

The PRA is not meant to be a certificate of physician competency and cannot be used for that purpose. The PRA certificate remains the property of the AMA and must be returned to the AMA if requested.

## Appendix

### Gifts to physicians from industry

The following opinion of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs of the American Medical Association, issued December 1990, has been incorporated into the AMA's Code of Medical Ethics.

### Opinion 8.061

Many gifts given to physicians by companies in the pharmaceutical, device, and medical equipment industries serve an important and socially beneficial function. For example, companies have long provided funds for educational seminars and conferences. However, there has been growing concern about certain gifts from industry to physicians. Some gifts that reflect customary practices of industry may not be consistent with the Principles of Medical Ethics. To avoid the acceptance of inappropriate gifts, physicians should observe the following guidelines:

- Any gifts accepted by physicians individually should primarily entail a benefit to patients and should not be of substantial value. Accordingly, textbooks, modest meals, and other gifts are appropriate if they serve a genuine educational function. Cash payments should not be accepted. The use of drug samples for personal or family use is permissible as long as these practices do not interfere with patient access to drug samples. It would not be acceptable for non-retired physicians to request free pharmaceuticals for personal use or use by family members. (I)
- Individual gifts of minimal value are permissible as long as the gifts are related to the physician's work (e.g., pens and notepads).
- The Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs defines a legitimate “conference” or “meeting” as any activity, held at an appropriate location where, (a) the gathering is primarily dedicated, in both time and effort, to promoting objective scientific and educational activities and discourse (one or more educational presentation(s) should be the highlight of the gathering), and (b) the main incentive for bringing attendees together is to further their knowledge on the topic(s) being presented. An appropriate disclosure of financial support or conflict of interest should be made.
- Subsidies to underwrite the costs of continuing medical education conferences or professional meetings can contribute to the improvement of patient care and therefore are permissible. Since the giving of a subsidy directly to a physician by a company's representative may create a relationship that could influence the use of the company's products, any subsidy should be accepted by the conference's sponsor who in turn can use the money to reduce the conference's registration fee. Payments to defray the costs of a conference should not be accepted directly from the company by the physicians attending the conference.

- Subsidies from industry should not be accepted directly or indirectly to pay for the costs of travel, lodging, or other personal expenses of physicians attending conferences or meetings, nor should subsidies be accepted to compensate for the physicians' time. Subsidies for hospitality should not be accepted outside of modest meals or social events held as a part of a conference or meeting. It is appropriate for faculty at conferences or meetings to accept reasonable honoraria and to accept reimbursement for reasonable travel, lodging, and meal expenses. It is also appropriate for consultants who provide genuine services to receive reasonable compensation and to accept reimbursement for reasonable travel, lodging, and meal expenses. Token consulting or advisory arrangements cannot be used to justify the compensation of physicians for their time or their travel, lodging, and other out-of-pocket expenses.
- Scholarship or other special funds to permit medical students, residents, and fellows to attend carefully selected educational conferences may be permissible as long as the selection of students, residents, or fellows who will receive the funds is made by the academic or training institution. Carefully selected educational conferences are generally defined as the major educational, scientific or policymaking meetings of national, regional or specialty medical associations.
- No gifts should be accepted if there are strings attached. For example, physicians should not accept gifts if they are given in relation to the physician's prescribing practices. In addition, when companies underwrite medical conferences or lectures other than their own, responsibility for and control over the selection of content, faculty, educational methods, and materials should belong to the organizers of the conferences or lectures.

(l) Issued June 1992 based on the report, "Gifts to Physicians from Industry," adopted December 1990; (JAMA. 1991; 265: 501 and Food and Drug Law Journal.1992; 47: 445-458); Updated June 1996 and June 1998.

## Ethical issues in CME

At its 1991 Annual Meeting, the AMA House of Delegates adopted a resolution requesting the AMA to “develop and publish guidelines to assist physicians in identifying CME of high quality, responsive to their needs, and promulgate ethical principles regarding the responsibilities of physicians to participate in CME programs which they claim for CME recognition, credit, or other purposes.” The Council responded to the resolution with the following opinion derived from principles I and V of the Principles of Medical Ethics.

### Opinion 9.011

Physicians should strive to further their medical education throughout their careers, for only by participating in continuing medical education (CME) can they continue to serve patients to the best of their abilities and live up to professional standards of excellence. Fulfillment of mandatory state CME requirements does not necessarily fulfill the physician's ethical obligation to maintain his or her medical expertise.

**Attendees.** Guidelines for physicians attending a CME conference or activity are as follows:

- The physician choosing among CME activities should assess their educational value and select only those activities which are of high quality and appropriate for the physician's educational needs. When selecting formal CME activities, the physician should, at a minimum, choose only those activities that (a) are offered by sponsors accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), or a state medical society; (b) contain information on subjects relevant to the physician's needs; (c) are responsibly conducted by qualified faculty; (d) conform to Opinion E-8.061: Gifts to Physicians from Industry.

- The educational value of the CME conference or activity must be the primary consideration in the physician's decision to attend or participate. Though amenities unrelated to the educational purpose of the activity may play a role in the physician's decision to participate, this role should be secondary to the educational content of the conference.
- Physicians should only claim credit commensurate with the actual time spent attending a CME activity or in studying a CME enduring material.
- Attending promotional activities put on by industry or their designees is not unethical as long as the conference conforms to Opinion E-8.061: Gifts to Physicians from Industry and is clearly identified as promotional to all participants.

**Faculty.** Guidelines for physicians serving as presenters, moderators, or other faculty at a CME conference are as follows:

- Physicians serving as presenters, moderators, or other faculty at a CME conference should ensure that (a) research findings and therapeutic recommendations are based on scientifically accurate, up-to-date information and are presented in a balanced, objective manner; (b) the content of their presentation is not modified or influenced by representatives of industry or other financial contributors, and they do not employ materials whose content is shaped by industry. Faculty may, however, use scientific data generated from industry-sponsored research, and they may also accept technical assistance from industry in preparing slides or other presentation materials, as long as this assistance is of only nominal monetary value and the company has no input in the actual content of the material.
- When invited to present at non-CME activities that are primarily promotional, faculty should avoid participation unless the activity is clearly identified as promotional in its program announcements and other advertising.

- All conflicts of interest or biases, such as a financial connection to a particular commercial firm or product, should be disclosed by faculty members to the activity's sponsor and to the audience. Faculty may accept reasonable honoraria and reimbursement for expenses in accordance with Opinion E-8.061: Gifts to Physicians from Industry.

**Sponsors.** Guidelines for physicians involved in the sponsorship of CME activities are as follows:

- Physicians involved in the sponsorship of CME activities should ensure that (a) the program is balanced, with faculty members presenting a broad range of scientifically supportable viewpoints related to the topic at hand; (b) representatives of industry or other financial contributors do not exert control over the choice of moderators, presenters, or other faculty, or modify the content of faculty presentations. Funding from industry or others may be accepted in accordance with Opinion E-8.061: Gifts to Physicians from Industry.
- Sponsors should not promote CME activities in a way that encourages attendees to violate the guidelines of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, including Opinion E-8.061: Gifts to Physicians from Industry, or the principles established for the American Medical Association's Physician Recognition Award. CME activities should be developed and promoted consistent with guideline (2) for Attendees.
- Any non-CME activity that is primarily promotional must be identified as such to faculty and participants, both in its advertising and at the conference itself.
- The entity presenting the program should not profit unfairly or charge a fee which is excessive for the content and length of the program.
- The program, content, duration, and ancillary activities should be consistent with the ideals of the AMA CME program.

(I, V) Issued December 1993; Updated June 1996





For the first time, we have separate booklets for physicians and providers, both of which are available online.

### **For more information...**

Please visit our Web site, [www.ama-assn.org/cme](http://www.ama-assn.org/cme) for more information about

- the PRA
- AMA web CME
- complimentary CME courses
- upcoming conferences
- PRA booklets for providers

For questions about the PRA, including the status of your application

312 464-4672

For general information about CME

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