Mandatory Continuing Medical Education (CME) Requirement by State Licensing Boards
Susan M. Rose, D.O.
Health Policy Fellowship
July 20, 2004
Abstract

The vast majority of states require mandatory continuing medical education (CME) for the renewal of a medical license to help assure the public that licensed physicians are competent. Studies have failed to prove that current CME requirements, or the lack thereof, impact the competence of physicians and the quality of medical care.

Regulations require attendance at a CME activity, but no state has implemented testing of knowledge gained or has measured impact of the educational experience on the quality of practice. Studies show that lecture-style presentation of CME is the least efficient for gain in knowledge and change of practice, yet it is the most common format at CME events. Board certification might be a more accurate measure of physician competence; studies show that physicians who are more than ten years past training and who are not board certified are more likely to be sanctioned by a medical board.

I recommend revamping the CME system in this country to coordinate with competency based testing for maintenance of licensure. The requirements should be consistent from state to state and among specialties to help assure all patients have access to quality medical services and to allow for more efficient medical license portability. As Neil Donen of the University of Manitoba recommends, say “no to mandatory continuing medical education, and yes to mandatory practice auditing and professional educational development.”