

MEDICAL BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE REPORT ISSUED: September 28, 2009
 SUBJECT: Continuing Medical Education (CME) Requirements
 STAFF CONTACT: Janie Cordray

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUESTED ACTION:

Staff is recommending and asking permission to: 1) establish an advisory committee to study CME; and 2) schedule an afternoon symposium on the subject of continuing medical education with appropriate speakers and participants, including representatives from the Federation of State Medical Boards, on Tuesday, July 27, 2010, preceding the quarterly Board meeting, or Thursday, July 29, 2010, prior to Committee meetings. This Symposium will coincide with DCA's Conference being held that week.

SUMMARY:

The Board has asked staff to study the existing continuing medical education requirements to examine if they are sufficient or useful, and to prepare the subject for study by the Board.

Currently, California physicians are required to complete 50 hours of approved continuing medical education every two years as a condition of their license renewal. The law places the responsibility with the Board to promulgate regulations to establish the specific requirements and approval of coursework.

The current literature on continuing education's usefulness or value to physician's continuing competence is voluminous, and most agree that while CME has some value, many factors affect whether or not it improves physicians' practices. Its value is dependent upon the quality of the curriculum, teacher, and student, as well as relevance to the physician's practice.

At present, the regulations are extremely broad, and grants credit for anything accredited "category 1" by approved providers. There is no requirement for external or self assessment or that coursework be specifically relevant to physicians' skill, experience or specialty.

A number of institutions and organizations have examined the subject and have published a variety of useful reports on the subject. In 2008, The Federation of State Medical Boards convened a committee on the Maintenance of Licensure. (Our Deputy Director, Kimberly Kirchmeyer, served on the committee.) Out of the committee's work, a model policy was developed, and later, the FSMB adopted a policy statement and *Guiding Principles*. While the project and adopted policies do not exclusively deal with CME, it will likely be a component in lifelong learning of physicians.

Staff has been developing a summary issue paper on the subject which will be presented to the members prior to their discussions. It is proposed that an Advisory Committee be set up to study the subject, and hold a symposium prior to the July 2010 Board meeting, inviting participants knowledgeable in continuing education, including the Federation of State Medical Boards. The following elements would be included in the discussions:

- Current California law and regulations, including the authority of the Board to set standards in regulation;
- Other states' laws and regulations;
- Other California health care practitioner licensees' laws and regulations;
- Current literature on the value of continuing medical education and best practices;
- The role of external and self-assessment in improving continuing education and continued competence;
- The Federation's work in Maintenance of Licensure and their *Guiding Principles*;
- The role of financial conflicts of interest in the delivery of continuing medical education, and;
- The role of specialty board certification and re-certification in continuing medical education requirements and ensuring continued competence.

CONCLUSION:

The subject of continuing medical education is extremely broad, and expertise outside of the Medical Board is abundant. It would be helpful for the members to participate in a discussion with experts to determine the avenue the Board should take in tackling such a vast subject. Board members may be attending the DCA Conference in Sacramento on July 28, and therefore it would be cost effective for the Board and convenient for the advisory committee to hold a 3-hour symposium coinciding with the DCA event and Board meetings. This symposium would serve as a foundation for future Board work to determine if current requirements are sufficient, and whether or not future regulations should be promulgated.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Holding the symposium to coincide with the DCA Conference and Board meetings is cost effective, as well as being most convenient for members.

PREVIOUS MBC AND/OR COMMITTEE ACTION:

In the past, the Board, through its former Division of Licensing, has promulgated regulations to establish the hours and content of physicians' continuing medical education requirements for license renewal. In recent meetings of the Medical Board, members have expressed their desire to explore the usefulness and value of current CME requirements.