

Global Alliance for Medical Education - Meetings Archive

2002 Meeting Report: Do You Need Global Game Plan in CME?

By Tamar Hosansky

Medical meeting organizers and continuing medical education providers need a global game plan to address public health issues that cross national boundaries, said M. Roy Schwarz, MD, president of the China Medical Board in New York, during his keynote at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Global Alliance for Medical Education, held June 25 to 27 at the McGill Faculty Club in Montreal.

The conference brought together about 100 CME professionals from around the world to discuss physician education trends and partnership opportunities. Schwarz pointed out that international problems such as famine, obesity, and bioterrorism require new health care education models, and urged CME providers to develop bold new ideas.

The plenary session on how physicians learn around the world focused on how important it is for CME providers to understand cultural differences in learning styles when developing educational activities. Mary Lou Fuller, PhD, professor emeritus, department of teaching and learning, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, said that taking the attitude that 'We are all the same,' and denying our differences is a form of cultural blindness. Educators need to walk the talk, she said, and make sure to design programs that meet the needs of attendees from different cultures.

Several speakers also discussed strategies for incorporating adult learning principles into education programs. Henry B. Slotnick, Ph.D., Ph.D., visiting professor, School of Medicine, University of Wisconsin, pointed out that adult learners want practical solutions to problems they already have, and suggested that speakers engage attendees by asking them what they want to learn at the beginning of a session.

For speakers who need an extra push to deviate one iota from their prepared lectures, try this idea: David L. Schlumper, senior program manager, Serono Symposia International, Rockland, Mass. said during his presentation that he has e-mailed registrants before a conference asking them to identify the problems they're having in their practices; he then sends the answers to program faculty and encourages them to tailor their presentations.

And CME providers are going to need to use those techniques, as conferences retain their popularity as a forum for obtaining CME. Despite the myriad of educational programs now available via the Web, CD-ROMs, video, and audiotapes, not to mention old-fashioned books or journals -- physicians picked international conferences as the hands-down favorite method for obtaining education, according to a study published by the Board of Medical Education of the British Medical Association in December 2000.

Of the more than 2000 doctors who participated, 40 percent of respondents chose international conferences as their preferred forum for continuing medical education activities. External courses came in second, with 22 percent of the votes; while other methods, such as internal meetings, e-learning, and informal discussions all lagged far behind.

Also on the downside, presenter Edwin M. Borman, Chairman, international committee, British Medical Association, and UK Representative to the European Union of Medical Specialists, noted that physicians preferred the most passive forms of learning such as conferences, while more interactive learning forums such as ward rounds, were the least popular.

Other sessions at the GAME annual meeting focused on trends in Web CME, including the use of handheld computers for physician education; evidence based CME; and how the pharmaceutical industry views CME.

Fittingly, a game ended the GAME conference. After the last session, on how to evaluate CME's ROI to physicians, providers and pharma companies, the presenters divided the group into teams; each was allocated a betting pool of 500 points. As in "Jeopardy," we had to place our bets before we heard the questions. Facilitators then asked questions, based on the sessions we had just heard. Each team arrived at a consensus as to the answers, and the panelists - acting as judges - scored our responses.

The winning team received a prize. OK, so it was only a pen, but the exercise produced a lot of laughter and encouraged us to talk to each other and reflect on what we had learned.