

CME Implementation By A/Prof Goh Lee Gan

The medical profession is gearing up to the 25 points annual requirement for CME activities. The Singapore Medical Council (SMC) has worked with the professional bodies, namely the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (Academy), the College of Family Physicians, Singapore (College), and the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) to develop a Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme that is effective and easy to implement. The challenge that lies before the profession now is its implementation.

The SMA believes that doctors should continue to upgrade their knowledge and skills in order to provide better care for their patients through participation in CME activities.

The SMA has together with the Academy and the College, given SMC full support in developing an effective and easy way to implement CME. Each doctor has to earn 25 points a year.

We believe it should be within the ability of every medical practitioner to achieve this without the CME being too disruptive to his or her practice.

CME points can be earned from attending talks, reading articles and also doing distance learning courses. The latter should be of particular help to busy GPs. In fact, the College is developing such courses which will earn up to 18 out of the required 25 points a year. We encourage every doctor to participate energetically in such activities.

THE COLLEGE'S PLAN

The College encourages all family physicians to work towards the 25 CME points requirement. These may be achieved through a variety of ways, namely, participation in a teaching series (Category IA CME); attendance of talks and seminars (Category IB CME), and distance learning programmes (Category IIIA and Category IIIB CME). The College

is presently developing CME activities that will enable busy doctors to meet their CME requirements and still allow them to stay at their place of work, to keep up and to be able to do it at their own time and own pace. This is the Category IIIB CME initiative.

In its letter to its members, the College has outlined in some detail a plan for GPs to earn the 25 CME points annually. Their initiatives are shown in Table 1 and the strategies are as follows:

1. The College is developing under Category IIIB, short distance learning Core CME courses made up of 3 lessons each and earning 3 points per course for family physicians to do as self-study courses. These courses will resolve to quite a big extent the feeling of not having enough time out of the practice to attend CME activities. You can earn up to 18 points of Core FM points through completing 6 such courses at your own time.

Table 1: The SMC-CME requirements in brief for Family Physicians

CATEGORY	Sub-Categories		Points	Core FM points	Max
I "Face-to-Face" F2F Max 25 pts	I A	Series	1 if > 1hr	Awarded to events on application from the usual CME providers.	25
	I B	Ad-hoc	1 if 1 to < 2 hrs (1/4 day) 2 if 2 to 4hrs (1/2 day) 12 for a max. of six 1/2 days per meeting		
	I C	Overseas	Same as I B		
II Publications: Editor, Author, Reviewer Max 20 pts	Refereed	Chief	10 /paper	Activities in given list of journals e.g. Singapore Family Physician and Singapore Medical Journal. Doctors to register to get points.	20
		Subsidiary	5 /paper		
	Non-Refereed	Chief	4 /paper		
		Subsidiary	2 /paper		
III "Distance-Learning" Max 23 pts	III A	Reading - No Verification	1 per paper/tape	College Courses each with 3 modules & MCQ test by paper return or through e-learning.	5
	III B	With Verification	1 per module		18

Note:

For the SMC requirement of 25 points per calendar year, at least 13 points must be Core FM points. The College is given the role of accrediting Core FM points for activities in ALL categories. Family physicians thus have the choice of getting their Core or Non-Core points from a variety of CME activities in Categories I, II or III.

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2. 5 Core FM points can be earned from Category IIIA CME by reading 5 articles in a year, each earning 1 point. Examples of such articles are those in the Singapore Family Physician (SFP) and the Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ), to mention a few. This is an honour system and the doctor needs only to submit the titles of the articles read to gain the Core FM points.
3. Other categories of CME to earn the 2 remaining points: The Category IB CME points are earned from "face-to-face" attendance. By having (1) and (2), and earning the maximum points of 18 and 5 respectively, the number of Category IB CME activity points that need to be earned are 2. These 2 points could be obtained by attending 2 lectures, each giving 1 point, or an afternoon's seminar earning 2 points. The College also accredits events organised by the usual CME providers and we expect many such events would qualify for Core FM points. The reason behind this designation is to ensure that you are able to identify CME activities that are especially useful to you.

THE ACADEMY'S PLAN

Sample Calendar for Core CME Activities

For the current year (2002), the Academy has compiled sample calendars of approved Core CME activities for all the 35 specialties, which are posted at the Academy's website, www.academyofmedicine.edu.sg, to help Fellows to plan their own individual schedules. For any specialty where there is a perceived lack of Core CME activities, the Academy will take the lead through the relevant Chapter to offer additional CME activities either on its own or jointly with societies/hospitals/ departments/centres.

E-learning - On-line Specialty CME Programmes

The Academy is developing on-line specialty CME programmes to help bring CME to the desktops of specialists. The modular programme will carry 18 Core CME points/year. For the pilot stage,

3 specialties have been selected. Presently, the Academy is working closely with the College of Family Physicians Singapore on the delivery platform.

Close Monitoring and Counselling

The Academy will help monitor progress of its Fellows, with "personal" reminders/counselling to those with low CME scores. Members of the Education Committee will make personal contacts to help change the mindset of these Fellows and help stimulate participation in CME activities.

THE SMA'S PLAN

The SMA has in place a CME programme for the 4 areas that we have been rolling out, namely, ethics, legal, professional and practice management topics. The attendance at these sessions vary from 100 - 200 participants.

The SMA, through its Centre for Medical Ethics and Professionalism (CMEP), is devoted to developing CME programmes relating to issues of professionalism, medical ethics, health law and practice management.

The details and the number of seats that can be filled for 2002/2003 are:

1. **SMA Annual Ethics Convention**, to be held on the first Saturday and Sunday in November 2002. Highlights will be the SMA Lecture, Workshops and Seminars focusing on Professionalism, Medical Ethics, Health Law and Practice Management. Time duration: 4 hours per session, total of 3 sessions in 1¹/₂ day. CME points: 6 at least. Total seat capacity: 200 for each session.
2. **SMA Annual Medical Convention**, to be held in April 2002. Each year, the focus is on an important health topic. The theme for this year is "Health Screening", and the focus is on effective health screening for the middle-aged and elderly, and cancer screening. The College has endorsed the event as a Core CME for the family physicians. Time duration: 4 hours. CME points: 2. Total seat capacity: 200.

3. **SMA Seminars in Bioethics and Health Law** – 10 sessions a year for a cycle of 2 years, leading to an award of a certificate of attendance for those with 80 percent attendance or more. This programme is jointly organised with the Law Society of Singapore and Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Time duration: 1¹/₂ hours per session, total of 10 sessions a year. CME points: 1 point each. 10 points possible for attending the whole series. Total seat capacity: 200 for each session.

4. **SMA-SGH Seminars in Medical Negligence** – Modelled after the format of the seminars in Bioethics and Health Law held at TTSH. This programme is jointly organised with the Singapore General Hospital and Allen & Gledhill. There will be 10 sessions per year for a cycle of 2 years, starting in Year 2002. Time duration: 1¹/₂ hours per session, total of 10 sessions a year. CME points: 1 point each. 10 points possible for attending the whole series. Total seat capacity: 150 for each session.

5. **SMA Practice Management Workshops**, organised quarterly and focusing on practice-related issues. Time duration: 4 hours per session, total of 3 sessions per year, excluding 1 of which will be held in conjunction with the Ethics Convention. CME points: 2 points each session. 6 points for attending all 3 sessions. Total seat capacity: 200 each session.

Number of Doctors That Can Be Served by Our Programme

If a doctor were to attend all the activities from the SMA CME activities described, he will get 34 CME points and there are at least 100 places available for each CME activity. On average, there are enough activities and places to allow 600 doctors to get 5 points each from this type of CME. Of course in the real world, some may wish to partake more, and some less, of this type of CME. The limit for the SMC CME programme is that 12-13 CME points can come from these SMA CME activities. ■