

Royal College grants MOC accreditor status to the CAG

In October, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada granted the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) accreditor status for gastroenterology-related educational events. We can accredit programs for section 1 credits as part of the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) process.

The MOC process was established by the College to encourage physicians to learn and develop throughout their careers. The arguments in favour of participation in the process are convincing. To quote Dr J Connon in his introductory remarks in the University of Toronto's MOC handbook:

...in today's socio-political climate, it is essential that a mechanism exists to ensure that physicians not only keep abreast of important advances (as well as maintaining existing skills) but that their involvement in continuing medical education be demonstrated in a very clear way to professional governing bodies and the public at large.

Gastroenterologists who are currently Fellows of the College but do not participate in the program will not have their Fellowship renewed and will not be listed on a public register of participating Fellows. The implications are obvious.

Attainment of accreditor status presents the CAG with major opportunities and significant responsibilities.

We have the opportunity to become an even greater force in education because major CAG involvement in program development is a requirement for accreditation. This will ensure that educational activities produced by medical or nonmedical organizations will reflect an educational need of the CAG membership; there will be clear objectives, time for interaction and feedback to the audience on their learning. An improved standard of educational activities for CAG membership and physicians at large will be of benefit, not only to the physicians participating, but also to their patients, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of these educational events. An increased number of accredited events will assist CAG members in reaching annual continuing professional development targets.

We will not be involved in the accreditation of hospital rounds, journal clubs and similar local activities. Those activities will be accredited by local organizations such as the department or university continuing medical education group.

There will be a significant financial cost to the CAG to provide accreditation because the process requires CAG members to be on the planning committee for the event. Furthermore, the CAG will be responsible for maintaining records of attendance. Organizations will be charged for this.

The granting of accreditor status is also an opportunity for industry. Most, if not all, of the educational programs developed by the pharmaceutical industry are of an extremely high quality. Currently, however, if the industry wishes to have a program accredited, it is necessary to go through local accreditation organizations in each province. Now that CAG is an accredited provider, the pharmaceutical industry will be able work with the CAG to develop programs and have them accredited by a single accreditor with a national reach.

Along with the opportunities come responsibilities. We will have a responsibility to the College, to the CAG membership and to the groups with whom we will work to ensure that the integrity of the MOC process is maintained. We have indicated to the College that we intend not only to meet the standards set, but also to exceed them. We are absolutely committed as an organization to maintaining the integrity of this process and to ensuring that educational materials meeting CAG accreditation status are of the highest possible standard.

We are in the process of putting a structure in place to ensure that we meet our responsibilities. For now, however, this is an event to celebrate and one that will be recognized as a milestone in the evolution of CAG educational activities.

Desmond Leddin
Chair, CAG Education Committee

Information and details for the 2002 Canadian Digestive Diseases Week available on the CAG Web site: <http://www.cag-acg.org>

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