

**GUIDELINES FOR OBJECTIVES
FOR
“ONGOING” CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

For the purpose of the CME application, general objectives need to be written for “ongoing” activities. An ongoing activity is a regularly scheduled series such as Grand Rounds, Tumor Board, Morbidity and Mortality, and Journal Club. Specific objectives for each session/topic can be written later and included on the weekly flyer once the topic and speaker have been determined.

Learning Objectives can be useful in demonstrating and defining ongoing CME activities. Since it is usually their nature not to have topics planned for all sessions prior to the beginning of the year, it is essential that the framework of the program be well described. Defining the scope of the activity demonstrates the results of the planning function and the needs assessment.

If this is accomplished (including sufficient detail of the planning process, the methodology used in subject selection, and a definition of the scope of the program), the objectives do not need to be topic specific. Rather, they can provide the framework for demonstrating the planning of the activity.

The general objectives, therefore, need to include three components:

Time (e.g. “Over the next twelve months”),

Scope (e.g. “Patients presenting with uncommon symptoms or presentations of common problems encountered by a specified category of physician), and

Objectives - written in behavioral terms (see “List of Verbs for Objectives”)

The following are only examples of appropriate descriptions and objectives to assist Activity Directors in their planning and documentation.

Generally, ongoing activities fall into three separate categories.

Patient Oriented Series

A patient case acts as the trigger for a presentation, discussion, or problem solving activity relative to a specific medical subject or topic, or health problem. Examples include Morbidity & Mortality Rounds and Tumor Boards. The emphasis in these conferences is usually problem-solving and clinical decision-making activities. Evidence based medicine is key to providing a quality learning activity. These conferences are also useful to introduce and emphasize the importance of appropriate resource management and cost effective, efficient care.

To meet the requirement of a “planned activity,” the scope of which problems, topics, subjects will be covered in a defined time period needs to be determined and stated.

Example: **Tumor Board**

Time: *Over a one year period*

Scope: *Patient problems covering the areas commonly seen by primary care physicians.*

Objectives: For the topics to be covered the participant will be able to:

1. *Correlate clinical diagnosis with pathologic, radiologic, and surgical findings,*
2. *Discuss the staging and grading of the specific presented tumors,*
3. *List the treatment options for specific presented problems, and*
4. *Identify the psychosocial aspects, and how they affect treatment.*

Subject Oriented Series

A topical series based on a needs assessment in which some aspect(s) of a discipline, specialty, or subspecialty is covered. The teaching/learning techniques used are usually lecture, lecture/discussion, and panel discussion. The usual activities that fit best in this category are activities like Grand Rounds, Visiting Professor lectures, and Clinical Updates. Since they are not patient based, it is usually easier to define the scope of the program prospectively. This type of series is an appropriate place to include topics on managed care, cost effectiveness, quality improvement, and various forms of clinical practice guidelines.

Example: **Grand Rounds**

Time: *One year on a weekly basis*

Scope: *The major topics which are commonly seen by generalist physicians (based upon the incidence of disease, value of early diagnosis, and timely treatment, and effects on the population in general, are selection criteria which are important to the physician)*

Objectives: Participants will be able to:

1. *Relate current concepts of pathophysiology,*
2. *Cite established and new strategies in diagnosis,*
3. *Discuss management, and future directions of treatment, and*
4. *When applicable, list methods of prevention and/or early diagnosis.*

Combined Patient/Subject Oriented Series

In recent years it has become common to alter the form of an ongoing series to try to deal with more didactic material in the same setting as patient related and problem solving sessions. The variety in a single program is thought by some to maintain participant interest.

An example would be one in which the Scope was “Uncommon presentations of common problems &/or Common presentations of uncommon problems.”

This kind of program enables more variety in teaching/learning methods as well and this may have a role in the maintenance of interest. With physician time commitments being so tight, some physicians feel that this is more efficient use of their time.

Time: *One year*

Scope: *Unusual presentations of common patient problems seen by the primary care physician*

Objectives:

1. *List the common health problems that have recognized, unusual clusters of clinical manifestations.*
2. *Explain the pathophysiology of these clinical manifestation clusters.*
3. *Describe the initial steps of management for these conditions, and indicate the criteria for necessary consultation and/or referral.*

OTHER STEPS:

Evaluation: Summary evaluations must be done by participants no less than quarterly. These evaluations must address the participants' perceptions as to whether the series meets the stated objectives. Participants need to be given an opportunity to suggest additional topics for future sessions.

Outcomes measurement: A follow-up assessment of the impact of each CME activity is required.

Observer evaluation: Evaluation by an external observer/evaluator is strongly recommended.

Reporting: Submission of an application for renewal of the Activity's certification must be accompanied by a *Participant Evaluation Summary*, a listing of topics presented and discussed, the course director's evaluation of the course, including its ability to meet the stated objectives and how suggestions gleaned from the evaluation will be used to modify the course.

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