

## Disincentives for Continuing Medical Education in health professions

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Continuing Medical Education (CME) is an important part of medical education. In all health professions, postgraduate education is not only limited in University careers but also includes all the updated knowledge and skills a medical doctor/ health professional needs to work efficiently.

The most frequent disincentives for continuing medical education are:

1. Financial barriers.
2. High- level CME education is not available in your country.
3. Evaluators, responsible for your first work position or for a promotion, do not take into account your CME activities- they prefer candidates based on "other qualifications" (corruption).
4. You are not allowed to put into practice new methods and techniques at your workplace.
5. You are tired from continuing education, you are not motivated enough, and even free participation wouldn't work.

### 1. Financial Barriers

A real problem is that postgraduate education is not offered for free. It currently consists of a luxurious industry involving conference organizers, tourism offices and hotel owners. The real continuing education is shrinking if you think that most congresses take place at majestic places, available for enjoyment of sight-seeing, shopping, tours, shows and dining out. Poor countries where medical doctors cannot even support the living needs of their family with their earnings, have a bigger problem.

### 2. High- level CME education is not available in your country

Quality of medical conferences varies. Sometimes you feel that someone is killing your valuable time, when you see that the speaker you pay to see does not appear at all, or seems to have forgotten everything about his/her lecture, or knows less than expected. If you are unlucky, you may have repeated bad congress experiences. Why lose your time for congresses of low quality?

On the other hand, internet offers you free downloading of high quality research papers, and you can study for many hours at your free time, if you wish to learn more things about

new discoveries in your field. It is a very good educational strategy that some journals offer online CME tests to their readers, who can reply to answers and receive CME credits. This is the best offer given through the internet along with webinars. Also, interactive learning activities available online or in an electronic form as accompanying material of educational books belong to the best ways of continuing medical education (free or low cost method, available worldwide, not so useful for use in the curriculum vitae).

### 3. Evaluators, responsible for your first work position or for a promotion, do not take into account your CME activities- they prefer candidates based on "other qualifications" (corruption)

Continuing medical education is used as a means for the quality evaluation of medical doctors. A good doctor should "collect" congress certificates to prove that he is continuously taking part to educational activities inside his country and abroad. However, who tells us that doctors who carry many certificates have really been present during the educative part of the congress? And who confirms that they did not just pay the registration fees and just had fun in the non educative parts of the congress? Several limitations for attendants have been invented to face this problem at congresses. In my opinion, medical doctors should be re-evaluated with exams every 5-7 years, so that they can prove that their knowledge is updated and viable. However, as a general rule, certificates of attendance are accepted as qualifications that prove the updated knowledge.

The assessment of medical doctors varies from country to country. For example, in the National System of Health in Greece, many evaluators may give a 9.5/10 mark to a medical doctor who has attended one congress during the 5 past years, and give a 10/10 mark to a medical doctor who has attended 100 congresses during the same period! This makes many Greek doctors avoid medical congresses, because they think that congress certificates are useless for their evaluation, and find that high registration fees of congresses are absolutely a real loss of money. The wide problem of corruption among evaluators for appointments in Public Hospitals is a major disincentive for continuing medical education in Greece. The same equals for public Universities, too. Many