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Meeting Abstract

Communications Training in Continuing Medical Education - A Current Analysis of Supply and Demand in the Area Served by the North Rhine Medical Society in Germany

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Abstract

Question: Communication abilities are a central component of medical practice. Much attention is devoted to this aspect in medical education. Communication should also be an important part of a physician's continuing professional development. The present analysis investigates the question of the extent to which this topic is in demand by physicians in the framework of continuing medical education (CME) and to which extent it is adequately made available in the various formats by course organisers.

Methods: The continuing medical training habits of 1,110 general practitioners, ophthalmologists, and orthopedic surgeons from the university cities of Cologne, Aachen and Bonn were studied in general and with a special emphasis on the topic of communications. For this purpose, in the period from 2002 to 2007, the participation certificates submitted to the North Rhine Medical Society (NRMS) were analysed with regard to their number, training format (category) and content. In addition, all further training events certified by the NRMS in 2007 were examined with respect to content and format.

Results: In the period from 2002 to 2007 physicians submitted a total of $n = 44,891$ certificates of further education. Of these, 1858 (4.1%) training events could be assigned to the topic communications. The didactic modality involved in 847 (45.6%) of the communication courses took the form of a lecture (category A) while 871 (46.9%) of the events followed an interactive concept (category C).

Of all the events submitted in 2007 for certification ($n = 18,932$), 388 (2.0%) included the topic communications. Furthermore, in only 95 courses (0.5%) did the topic communications account for more than 50% of the individual course content. In all, only $n=10$ (0.05%) courses with the main topic communications were provided in the fields of internal medicine, general medicine and pediatrics. Among the offered CME formats, those of category C (59.2%) dominated, followed by category A (27.3%).

Conclusion: The subject communications is only represented to a minor extent within the framework of continuing medical education. In light of the effects of good communications between physician and patient on compliance and therapeutic success, and thus also on patient safety, more CME events on this topic should be promoted within the concept of continuing professional development. Also, in the development of new educational courses, those with interactive teaching concepts should be provided in increasing numbers and the respective events should be scientifically evaluated by accompanying teaching/learning research.