



Newsletter from the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology

Continuous Medical Education

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CONTINUOUS MEDICAL EDUCATION, OR Continuous Professional Development, has already become a reality in North America. It is now becoming mandatory in many European and other countries. The concept of continuous professional development goes beyond that of continuous medical education, and for that reason is the one to be preferred. It is based on the well-developed tradition of life-long learning in the medical profession, and is part of the ethical responsibility of every doctor.¹

In some European countries, it is already mandatory to show commitment to continuous medical education. This will soon become necessary in most, if not all, countries of Europe. This means that every professional in medicine must learn and update their knowledge and skills in a constant way. This can be done by reading the medical literature, attending courses, and so on. Attending teaching courses, symposiums and meetings, nonetheless, is a costly endeavour, and time consuming. It is also important, since if medical doctors do not fulfill the requirements, they could lose the right to practise in their chosen specialty. To prove their commitment to the process, many doctors are already required to collect credit points specific for their chosen specialty. The rules for the award and collection of such points in European Paediatric Cardiology have been elaborated by the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology, and can be studied on the website of the Association. In general, it was agreed that 1 hour of education would account for 1 credit point, once the Association had validated the particular course or symposium generating the points.

More recently, the Association has agreed to follow the international rules now developed by the European Council for Continuing Medical Education. This European Council is a body of the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes. In a previous

newsletter, we had already described the aspirations of the Professional Advisory Committee of the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology to join the European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology, and to follow European rules in order to improve objectivity and quality.² During the business meeting of our Association in Porto this year, the assembly accepted and ratified this proposal.

By providing a detailed programme for evaluation to the European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology, any scientific society, university, teaching hospital, or institute providing medical education can now apply for accreditation, and can receive credit points, in respect of any course, congress or meeting relating to cardiology.³ For Paediatric Cardiology, which is not yet a monospeciality in all European countries, and which does not yet possess a national society or association in all European countries, this European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology become of greatest value in providing more objective evaluation of meetings through an independent committee with European, and hopefully soon worldwide, recognition. Courses and meetings thus accredited also become recognised for continuous education in paediatric cardiology outside the organising country.

The European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology is made up from experts in both adult and paediatric cardiology, who will together evaluate the submitted scientific courses, symposiums, and meetings. We suggest that all colleagues interested in organising or attending recognised courses and meetings in European should consult the web page of this Board of Accreditation.³ The meetings that have been accredited in paediatric cardiology will also be announced in web pages of the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology under the heading of "Meetings".⁴ Organizers who wish to seek accreditation of their meeting will also find all necessary details

for application to the European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology on this web page, which provides a special on-line service for accreditation. This service has started as from September 2002. Please note that applications must be submitted at least 6 weeks before the event is to take place. Otherwise, an appropriate evaluation and announcement cannot be made. Those who have received accreditation can then use the logo of the European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology, and the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology, in their advertisements and literature.

Costs, unfortunately, cannot be avoided. The fees for this service of accreditation service are indicated

on the web page, and can always be requested. Despite the costs, it is of great value for our specialty in Europe, and those who practise within it, that we can provide this service.

References

1. For more details about the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes see their webpage at <http://www.uems.be/>
2. Daniëls O, Qureshi S, Weber H. Thoughts about the future of Paediatric Cardiology. *Cardiol Young* 2002; 12; 89–90.
3. For details about European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology, see the web page at www.ebac-cme.org
4. www.aepc.org