

A Guide for Physicians in GAHS Facilities



A Program of the
**General Authority for Health Services
for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi**



**Continuing Medical Education
(CME) Program Guide**

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Introduction to the Continuing Medical Education (CME) Program Guide

Starting January 1st, 2005 participation in Continuing Medical Education (CME) is a requirement for all physician personnel* (i.e., consultants, specialists, house officers, dentists, etc.) in General Authority for Health Services facilities – hospitals, primary health centers, dental centers, etc.

Each physician will require 50 hours per calendar year – a minimum of those 50 hours must be accredited CME. Accreditation is a 'seal of approval' that demonstrates the educational activity has met certain quality standards.

The objectives of the CME program are:

- To ensure that physicians in GAHS facilities are engaged in continuous learning directed at enhancing the quality of patient care
- To provide standardized criteria regarding what constitutes accredited (and unaccredited) CME
- To provide guidelines on what activities will be accepted and tools to document and record participation in CME

Physicians are encouraged to determine the best course of participation in CME, considering their clinical and professional responsibilities and their preferred learning style. The General Authority for Health Services recognizes that physicians are already busy. In acknowledging this, the GAHS CME Advisory Committee has attempted to develop a program and provide documentation (including this guide) that is user friendly.

Your feedback is welcome to: cme@gahs.ae

**For the purpose of this document, "Physician personnel" is an inclusive term referring to doctors and dentists.*

Background

The General Authority for Health Services (GAHS) for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, sponsors continuing medical education¹ for physicians and other health professionals within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, by offering opportunities to enrich and extend their medical knowledge. Doing so ultimately benefits the patients receiving health care from these physicians and other health professionals.

CME events supported by and held at the General Authority for Health Services are meant to *supplement* existing CME programs being held in hospitals and in other facilities in the UAE and to add to the professional development being undertaken by physicians and others. It is a *local alternative* for health care professionals to access high quality continuing education.

In 2002, Abu Dhabi CME (www.abudhabicme.com) was launched – an initiative supported by GAHS, under the direction of the Chairman of the CME Advisory Committee, Dr. Wael Al Mahmeed.

Since that time, a web site (with on-line CME) has been created, a distribution list of participants and others interested in CME has been developed, hundreds of lectures have been held, a number of seminars, symposia and workshops have been organized and the Abu Dhabi Nurse Journal has been published! Undoubtedly several hundred health professionals have benefited from this initiative.

A Minimum Requirement for CME

Effective **January 1st 2005**, each physician or dentist working within health facilities under the jurisdiction of the GAHS will be required to participate in a **minimum of 50 hours** of CME annually.

Of the 50 hours, a minimum of 25 CME hours **must** be accredited (by a credible, recognized body). The remaining 25 hours can be accredited OR unaccredited.

¹ The term 'continuing medical education' (CME) is used, however it is recognized that such learning activities may be for physicians, nurses and other allied health professionals.

Some hospitals in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and some professional regulatory bodies in other countries already have minimum requirements for participation in CME – the GAHS requirement is not in addition to those requirements but can likely be met at the same time, using the same credits.

There are two major types of CME that will be acknowledged within the program: accredited and unaccredited. Although a minimum of 25 of the required 50 hours must be accredited CME, there is no maximum – all 50 hours (or a portion thereof, beyond 25 hours) could be from accredited activities and events. This is to maximize the flexibility for participants.

<i>Overall Minimum Requirement</i>	50 hours per year	
<i>Minimum Requirement by Classification</i>	Accredited CME <i>Minimum of 25 hours out of 50 / year</i>	Unaccredited CME <i>Maximum 25 hours out of 50 / year</i>

A CME event or program is accredited when it:

- has been reviewed and evaluated (relative to published criteria) by a recognized body
- is found to meet or exceed published criteria that emphasize the quality of the event or activity

The accrediting body can be any recognized, credible educational, scientific or professional organization that has evaluated the activity against generally accepted standards of excellence in CME. Two local accrediting bodies include the General Authority for Health Services (GAHS) and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the United Arab Emirates University. There are many other accrediting bodies worldwide which will be acceptable to the GAHS, so long as they evaluate events relative to generally accepted standards of excellence in CME

Accreditation is like having a 'seal of approval' that the CME activity is based on need, has clearly defined learning outcomes, allows for participant involvement, and undergoes a process of evaluation leading to continuous improvement. Participants in CME events and activities should encourage sponsors of such to seek accreditation, in advance of the event taking place.

To maximize flexibility for participants and recognize that there are numerous methods of professional development, the GAHS program classifies CME activities into three sections. Each of these is described in the following portion of this document, complete with the type of documentation that must be kept (to acknowledge participation) and the credit value. Please note the different credit values for activities in the three sections.

Section 1 CME	Accredited* <i>Group Learning Activities</i> * (accredited by a recognized body)	
Examples	Documentation Required	Credit Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Rounds • M & M Rounds • Departmental Rounds • Journal Clubs • Workshops, courses, conferences, lectures, symposia, etc. <p><i>These events may be held locally or internationally</i></p>	<p>- Certificate of attendance listing hours of participation or credit hours for attending</p> <p><i>The planning body responsible for developing and hosting these activities typically supply participants with proof of attendance such as a certificate</i></p>	<p>1 credit per hour of participation</p> <p><i>No maximum for credits allowed in this section</i></p>



Section 2 CME	Accredited Self Assessment and Professional Development Activities	
Examples	Documentation Required	Credit Value (note the different values)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited self-assessment programs (including virtual reality simulators) and those developed by recognized bodies (e.g., national specialty societies, licensing colleges, etc.) • Practice audits (including patient surveys), self-initiated patient care reviews or audits, utilization studies and other quality improvement activities • Structured learning projects, traineeships, Fellowships, Masters, PhD programs • Educational development (presentations, guidelines, etc.) research, teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Written confirmation of completion of the program by the sponsor - Audit proposal and description of physician participation, summary of findings, outcomes for practice - A clear description of the learning project outlined in a portfolio manner (stimulus, process, results, outcomes, etc.) - List of relevant activities with dates, times clearly identified - Written proof of teaching having occurred 	<p>2 credits per hour of participation <i>No maximum allowable credits in this section</i></p> <p>2 credits per hour of participation <i>No maximum allowable credits in this section</i></p> <p>1 credit per hour of participation <i>No maximum allowable credits in this section</i></p> <p>1 credit per hour of participation <i>Maximum allowable credits in this section: 25 per year</i></p>

Section 3 CME	Other Activities – Unaccredited	
Examples	Documentation Required	Credit Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading journals and texts • CME through Computer / Internet, Audio tapes / Video tapes, etc. • Literature and information searches (MEDLINE[®]) • Lectures, rounds, courses, workshops, etc. that are non-accredited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citation of journal article or text (title and volume, issue, edition, etc.) and length of time devoted to reading - Citation of audio, video or CD (name, topic, supplier, etc.) and length of time devoted to education - Copy of search and results - Certificate of attendance listing hours of participation or credit hours for attending or registration receipt 	<p>1 credit per hour of participation</p> <p><i>Maximum allowable credits in this section: 25 per year</i></p>

Tracking and Monitoring of Participation in CME

It is the expectation that each physician will be responsible for retaining documentation on participation in CME, to substantiate the requirement for the minimum number of hours. To assist with this, copies of a CME Portfolio will be distributed by the GAHS. This portfolio is provided as a handy storage place for filing and safe-keeping of certificates, receipts, logs of journals read, etc.

Although participants may "sign in" to events using an attendance roster or registration sheet, each physician should maintain a personal, individual record of events attended or other activities in which he or she participated. Not only is this the best way of tracking attendance and participation in CME but maintaining this record will be a useful document for physicians who are:

- Undertaking an assessment of participation in CME for the annual performance appraisal
- Developing a plan for future professional development based on past participation in various CME activities

Participation in CME will be monitored by the employing agency (hospital, primary health center, dental center) and by the GAHS. This information will be useful in making decisions about promotion or contract renewal.

The GAHS will also undertake random monitoring of participation in CME by selecting a sample of physicians from each of the GAHS facilities for audit purposes. The audit will be to ensure the minimum requirement is met and to validate self-reporting of participation in CME activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is CME?

Continuing Medical Education (CME) simply means learning! Most often it consists of educational activities which serve to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, professional performance and relationships that physicians and other health professionals use when providing service to patients, the public, or the profession.

What is the purpose of CME?

It is generally accepted that a physician's ability to maintain a high level of professional competence is achieved by continually upgrading knowledge and skills. Thus, the basic purpose of CME is to improve the performance of the health professional in practice, and thus enhance the care that patients receive.

Why is a minimum requirement for CME being introduced by the GAHS?

Physicians have a professional obligation for the maintenance, development and expansion of knowledge throughout their careers. The minimum requirement builds on this inherent professional responsibility and will facilitate physicians' keeping abreast of the developments in their specialties and the introduction of new treatments and technology. It will enable them to provide high quality care to those seeking health services in Abu Dhabi.





In addition, the GAHS will link the requirements for CME with renewal of appointment at GAHS facilities, thus rewarding physicians who participate in CME activities.

Is the GAHS the first organization to introduce minimum requirements for CME?

No, the introduction of minimum requirements for CME is a trend common to many professions, and to many physician organizations throughout the world. Some hospital facilities in Abu Dhabi (e.g., Tawam, SKMC) already have it as a requirement, as do other health organizations throughout the UAE. The GAHS requirement is comparable to international standards for maintenance of competence and licensure amongst physicians.

What will CME do for me?

In addition to the obvious benefits of acquiring new knowledge / skills, participating in CME:

- Helps you to identify and plan where you require additional knowledge and skills
- Means you have taken responsibility for life-long learning, development and career advancement
- Supports the basic principles and obligations of your chosen profession
- Demonstrates to patients, peers and the public that you are taking appropriate steps to maintain your level of competence

How do I choose what CME activity(ies) to participate in?

Everyone will start from a different perspective – CME is a very personal journey – you are best qualified to assess your own learning needs. However, the following questions might be a good place to start:

- is the CME activity essential or important to my professional practice?
- is the activity related to a career aspiration that I have?
- is the activity accredited? (remember the requirement for 25 hours of accredited CME)
- what learning materials and methods do I find most useful? Lectures – books, etc.? Do I prefer to learn alone or in groups where I exchange information?
- is this activity within my resources – time, budget, etc.? If not, is there another way that I can access this information?
- does this appear to be a quality activity? Are the organizers experienced as providers of CME? Is the location easily accessible?
- does this represent “new”, evidence-based learning for me - that will provide me with original ideas that I can incorporate into my practice to improve patient care?

How do I earn credits from accredited activities and events?

Look for accredited activities – those which have the recognition of a legitimate body that has assessed the quality of the activity according to generally accepted standards. Many of the activities held in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi—either at the GAHS or its facilities are accredited and more and more will become accredited when participants start to ask for this! Suggest to those providers of unaccredited events that they contact the GAHS to learn how easy this process can be.

What kind of documents should I keep to demonstrate that I've participated in CME?

It depends on the type of activity. Often when you attend CME events, you will be given a certificate of attendance / participation which clearly indicates the number of credits and the accrediting body. Sometimes you will get a receipt if you have paid to attend an activity or you might have a program that is distributed to you. Your employer may also track your attendance at CME and provide you with an annual transcript of attendance. You may receive a wallet card if you update your CPR. Keep all these documents and file them (according to which section the credits belong) in your *CME Portfolio*. That is where you can also record your participation in section 2 or 3 activities, such as undertaking research, doing a literature search, reading journals and texts, etc.

Many activities held locally are not interesting to me or do not meet my learning needs. What should I do?

Abu Dhabi CME and the GAHS will attempt to provide a wide variety of CME activities; however it is not always possible to meet specific needs, given such a diverse physician population. Although we work closely with our program directors (for the specialty areas) and our representatives in facilities to get an idea of what's needed, we would be pleased to hear from you about the types and topics of programs that would interest you!

We also recommend that you research a topic that is of particular interest to *you* (which would be eligible for credits in section 2) and then share that knowledge with others through a series of *accredited* lectures or workshops (eligible for section 1 credits).

I live in a rural part of the Abu Dhabi Emirate and our small facility does not have regular rounds. How will I meet my minimum CME requirement?

We encourage you to discuss with your medical administration, how you can work together to start a CME program, within your organization. Even though your facility is small, you could present interesting or difficult cases that could be discussed in multi-disciplinary rounds. Even two rounds per month (assuming they meet the standards for accreditation) would help to meet your requirement for those 25 credits. Attending (or researching and presenting rounds) along with journal reading (there are many free journals available through the Internet—see below) would be a good way to fulfill your total CME requirement.

Your facility might also want to start a Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) program and becoming involved in that, as a participant or as an instructor is another way to earn credit hours. Regularly checking the programs available in the larger centers of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain (through www.abudhabicme.com) would allow you to select those that are of interest and importance and possibly plan to attend on your off time.

Some health professional journals provide free access directly through the journal web page. Others can be accessed through the following sites:

<http://www.freemedicaljournals.com/>

<http://www.highwire.org>

<http://www.plos.org/medicine/>

I already have to earn 80 hours per year because of the membership in the professional society in my home country! Now with this requirement, I'll have to earn 130 hours (80 + 50)!

No! More than likely, you can cover off the 50 hours with the *same* programs that count towards your 80 hours, so long as you fulfill the requirement for 25 hours of accredited CME and 25 hours of other types of CME (accredited or unaccredited).

My spouse is a registered nurse and one of our children is a respiratory therapist. Will this program be extended to professions other than physicians, in the future?

The minimum requirement covers only physicians and dentists, at the present time. Whether or not it will be extended to other health professionals in the future is unknown at this time.

What if I research, prepare for and give a presentation? Can I earn credits for that?

Yes - let's say for example you want to give a lecture on "Benefits and Outcomes in Minimally Invasive Surgery". If you undertook a literature search and read through various abstracts over a period of 2 hours, you would earn 2 credits from Section 3 (unaccredited). If you then took another 3 hours to prepare the presentation, based on the learning needs of your audience and using specific learning objectives, you would earn 3 accredited credits from Section 2 (Educational Development). And giving the lecture (assuming it earns accreditation) and leading the questions and answers over a 1 hour period would earn you another 1 credit from Section 2 (Educational Development). Note that there are annual maximums for some of these activities, but if they contribute to "new" learning for you, they are certainly applicable within the program.

Where can I get more information?

Information on the minimum requirements, the accreditation process and a full outline of upcoming events (including the introduction of "on line" CME) can be found on: **www.abudhabicme.com**

If you have questions or suggestions, please feel free to e-mail us at: **cme@gahs.ae**



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